DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 318 204 EC 230 834

AUTHOR Silverman, Linda, Ed.
TITLE Understanding Our Gifted. Volume 1, Issues 1-6, September 1988-July 1989.
PUB DATE Jul 89
NOTE 130p.
AVAILABLE FROM Snowpeak Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 3489, Denver, CO 80161 ($6.50 each issue).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
JOURNAL CIT Understanding Our Gifted; v1 n1-6 Sep 1988-Jul 1989

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Book Reviews; *Child Development; *Child Rearing; Creativity; Developmental Psychology; Elementary Secondary Education; *Gifted; Legislation; Parent Education; Preschool Education; *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This set of newsletters presents a developmental perspective on gifted students from preschoolers to adolescents. Included are such regular columns as "The Hidden Gifted Learner," "Parenting the Gifted," "Instructional Strategies," "Creative Ventures and Encounters," "The Reading Room" (a book review column), "Personality Plus," "Adolescent Passages," "The Highly Gifted," and "From Parent to Parent." Feature articles include, among others, "I Just Want My Child to Be Happy" (Wendy Roedell); "Stress and the Gifted Child" (James Delisle); "The Gift of Early Reading Ability" (Nancy Ewald Jackson); "Rules, Roles, and Responsibilities" (Joan Ellenhorn); "A Case for Acceleration" (Holly Hultgren); "Homeschooling Gifted Children" (Kathi Kearney); "Spatial Learners" (Linda Silverman); "Profiles of the Gifted in the Home Environment" (George Betts); "Special Problems of Young Highly Gifted Children" (Stephanie Tolan); "Guarding the Gifted Child: (Elizabeth Meckstroth); "Empathy, Ethics, and Global Education" (Annemarie Roeper); and "Moral Dilemmas as Formulated by Gifted Students" (Nicholas Colangelo). (PB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED318204

UNDERSTANDING
OUR
GIFTED™

Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

Volume 1, Issue 1

September 1988

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
● Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Linda C. Mancini
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

"I Just Want My Child To Be Happy"

Social Development and Young Gifted Children

Wendy C. Roedell, Ph.D.

Many parents have mixed feelings when they discover that their curious, verbal, active young child may in fact be gifted. "But I just want a 'normal' child," they say. "I just want my child to be happy." Contrary to the myth of the gifted child as a social outcast, most gifted children do adjust well when they have the emotional support and guidance of understanding adults. Parents and teachers can best provide this nurturance when they are sensitive to the unique developmental needs of gifted children. With their support, gifted children can indeed be both "gifted" and "happy."

Like all young children, gifted children face certain developmental challenges in growing up. Because they are gifted, and therefore different from many of the children around them, they have in addition some special areas of vulnerability. The more different a child's intellectual functioning is from that of same-age peers, the more difficult it becomes for that child to find a comfortable niche in the social world. *(Continued on page 7)*

FOCUS ON:

INSIDE

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS

The Hidden Gifted Learner
Suzanne Perry 3

Parenting The Gifted
Elizabeth Meckstroth.... 4

Instructional Strategies
JoyceVanTassel-Baska.. 5

The Reading Room
Stephanie Tolan............. 6

Personality Plus
Linda Silverman............. 8

The Highly Gifted
Kathi Kearney................. 13

Home Stretch
Felice Kaufmann............. 14

Creative Ventures And Encounters
Jerry Flack...................... 17

Current Developments in Gifted Education
Dorothy Knopper 18

From Parent to Parent
Linda Sinclair.................. 19

Stress and the Gifted Child

James R. Delisle, Ph.D.

Childhood: a time of carefree play, endless dreams, boundless horizons --a special part of life that often goes unnoticed by those living through it and is usually remembered as having been too brief by those who have since grown up. Childhood: the word itself conjures up images of simpler times, when all questions had answers and every day brought a newness, a freshness, a sense of wonder.

For some children of the 1980's, childhood remains as it has been perceived historically, that is, an age of toys, cartoon heroes, and friendships based on mud pie parties. But for too many other young people, childhood has lost its innocence; rather than being a time filled with fun it has become a time fraught with fear, confusion and adult-sized responsibilities. For these children, stress has become a part of their everyday lives.

Stress And The Gifted Child: *Where Does It Come From and How Does It Get There?*

Although children of all intellectual levels may *(Continued on page 12)*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EC230834

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the family of *Understanding Our Gifted*! It feels like we are a family giving birth to a new vision of giftedness. With this newsletter we are inaugurating a new perspective of giftedness--as advanced development rather than as achievement alone or the potential for achievement. Sir Francis Galton (1869) equated giftedness with eminence in *Hereditary Genius*, the book which began the study of giftedness. This view of giftedness has dominated the field for the last 120 years. But fame is as much a function of **opportunity** as it is a function of ability, and not all gifted children have the same opportunities in society. Not only that, one would have to have a crystal ball to figure out which children will be famous in adulthood.

The definition of giftedness as advanced development opens up new doors to previously undiscovered groups of gifted children: **culturally diverse, gifted/handicapped, creatively gifted, underachievers, gifted girls, young gifted, exceptionally gifted, empathically gifted**, and all those children who have high ability but do not show outstanding achievement in school. These groups of children are gifted on the **inside**, even though they may not appear gifted on the outside. Their giftedness is apparent in early childhood, when they master the developmental milestones ahead of schedule, and it can be seen in personality variables, such as intellectual curiosity, perfectionism, sensitivity, compassion, intensity, sense of humor, argumentativeness, and questioning of authority.

This view of giftedness is child-centered rather than adult-centered. We can begin to see the signs of advanced development even in the first few years of life. And it is concerned with the child's emotional development, not just his or her academic or cognitive development.

It is exciting to be a part of this new movement in the psychology of giftedness. In the upcoming issues, you will learn about recognizing giftedness in young children, early readers, "rules, roles and responsibilities," acceleration, home-schooling, learning styles, parenting, the highly gifted, ethical development, and many other topics addressed by our nationally-known columnists.

Thank you for joining our family. Please share this newsletter with other parents, teachers, pediatricians, counselors, administrators, and individuals who serve the gifted. We welcome your input and suggestions. Help us raise the baby by telling us what topics you want addressed and what information is most helpful to you. We look forward to hearing from you.

Linda Silverman

Understanding Our Gifted™

Published by: Snowpeak Publishing, Inc.™

Publisher
Linda Mancini

Editor
Dr. Linda Kreger Silverman

Editorial Consultant
Kathi Kearney

Production Coordinator
Pam McKinnie

Cartoonist
Linda Leviton

Production Consultants
Nancy Crandall
Evelyn R. Malpiede
Linda Sinclair
Ivy Wood

Advisory Board and Regular Contributors

Dr. Nicholas Colangelo, *University of Iowa*

Dr. James Delisle, *Kent State University*

Dr. Jerry Flack, *University of Colorado, Colorado Springs*

Dr. Holly Hultgren, *University of Denver*

Dr. Nancy Jackson, *University of Washington*

Kathi Kearney, *Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children, Auburn, Maine*

Elizabeth Meckstroth, *Counselor and Author, Dayton, Ohio*

Dr. Wendy Roedell, *Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, ESD 121, in Seattle, Washington*

Dr. Annemarie Roeper, *Co-Founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the Roeper Review*

Understanding Our Gifted (ISSN 1040-1350) is published bimonthly by Snowpeak Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122. Subscriptions are $30 for 1 year (6 issues). Back issues/single copies are $5.00. Third class postage paid at Littleton, CO. Subscription inquiries should be sent to the publishing office. For subscription address changes, send mailing label along with new address to UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO, 80122, eight weeks before moving. Material in this publication may not be reproduced in any form without permission of the Publisher. **Copyright 1988, SNOWPEAK PUBLISHING, INC. All rights reserved.**

Suzanne M. Perry

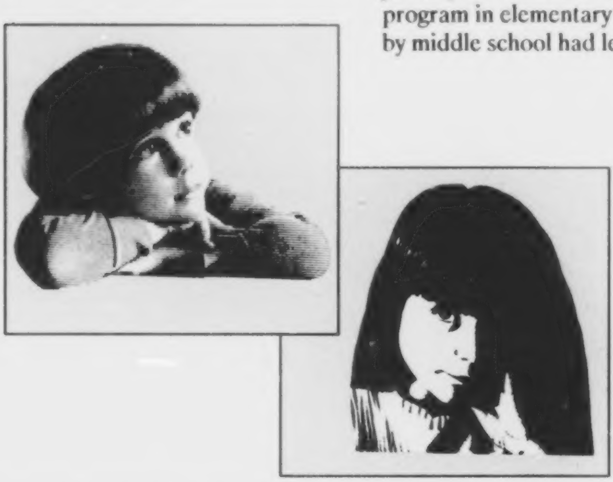
THE HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

Among the scores of June graduates who recently marched to the strains of "Pomp and Circumstance" into gymnasiums and stadiums all over the country, a certain set of students walked within the group yet often were not part of it. These youngsters are gifted but frequently have not been identified to participate in gifted programs because of their special needs.

See, there's Sarah over there. Her profound hearing loss merited services from the Special Education department for her entire thirteen years in public schools, but according to her teacher of the hearing handicapped, "We focused in on remediating Sarah's handicap, which didn't leave us much time to work on her strengths." Her strengths include a tested IQ of 148. Across the room we spot Jeffrey, a gifted learning-disabled student with an attention deficit disorder. He was so heavily medicated throughout much of his school career that it has only been in the last couple of years, as his medication was cut back, that his brilliant mathematical talent has begun to shine through the drug induced haze.

Sitting next to Jeff is Chi, who came to the United States from Vietnam just last year. Her mathematical talent was spotted right away, but only her own family is aware of her creative writing gifts, or of the two books of poetry she has already written--all in Vietnamese.

Waiting tables in the bar down the street is Lisa, who would have been wearing a cap and gown with the rest of the class of 1988 today, had she not dropped out in the middle of her junior year. Lisa had been in a gifted program in elementary school, but by middle school had learned that, "It isn't cool to be smart." By high school, society had managed to convince her that she'd never been that bright to begin with, so why stay in school when she could get married instead?



Across town Robert sits reading a computer manual in his cell in the county jail. No one in school had ever questioned Robert's intelligence, but then no one had ever tried to challenge him, either. They were too busy trying to get him to come out of the computer lab and get busy with his homework. Robert was arrested in May for finding his own challenge--transferring thousands of dollars via computer into his personal savings account.

Often called the silent or hidden gifted, these special needs gifted students are there--or missing from--every graduating class in the country. They include physically disabled gifted learners, gifted learning disabled students, gifted students from other cultures, gifted females, gifted "underachievers" and others. Over the next few months we will be taking an in-depth look at the needs of the Sarahs, Jeffs, Chis, Lisas and Roberts in this column as we examine the various populations of hidden gifted learners. ■

Suzanne Perry, Ph.D., is Instructional Resource for Project Think in the Aurora Public Schools in Colorado, and author of the children's book, Giftedness: Living with it and Liking it.

Elizabeth Meckstroth

PARENTING

"When my daughter was identified for the gifted program I felt that suddenly the job of parenting was made much more serious, that more would be required of me. I wondered if I could keep up with her and give her all the things she would need." Like this mother, parents of gifted children are often awed by their child and by the responsibilities of meeting their child's infinite needs. The theme of living with gifted people sometimes seems to be, "More, more, more!" And since *parents of gifted children are usually gifted children grown up*, you may feel that you are often distracted, fragmented, and frustrated by too many possibilities. You may feel imbalanced trying to keep yourself enthusiastic and appreciated. Usually there just isn't enough of you to go around!

How can you maximize your effectiveness in the limited time you have with each child? Probably the most comprehensive benefits will come from your careful listening.

Listen. Listen because you convey that what he has to say is important and you build self-esteem. Listening builds trust. We tend to trust people who listen closely because we think they have such good judgment! How do you win your child over to want to listen to you? Listen, listen, listen. When Renee wrote her college application essay on the person who had influenced her life the most, she picked her Mom. Not for all the carpooling to lessons, not for helping her with homework, not for taking her on trips, nor for sitting with her during piano practices, but because, "You always listened to me and you never made me feel that my ideas were stupid." Mom influenced her the most by giving her courage and self-understanding when she proved that Renee was worth hearing.

Gifted people often adjust what they say so that they will be accepted. They sometimes feel that other people do not take them seriously. This can lead to not trusting themselves. Careful listening can also be a lifeline. It can convince children that there is someone who thinks that they are valuable and worth understanding.

Listening says, "You matter to me; what you do and think and feel matters to me." It teaches how to interact with respect and understanding and thus, enables your child to be a safe friend. Your listening creates courage, understanding and trust for your child to eventually be his own source of power, possibility, and safe place.■

Elizabeth Meckstroth is a therapist and consultant in Dayton, Ohio and one of the authors of the award-winning book, Guiding the Gifted Child.

Ten Ways To Enhance Your Listening Power

Develop a confidential relationship so that you feel understood and appreciated!

Be a safe place.

Arrange private time together. Plan an appointment when you want to share your time.

Be aware of your body's messages: Keep equal or lower head level, eye contact, and open hands and arms.

Listen with your whole body, mind, and spirit as if nothing else at that moment matters as much as their thoughts and feelings. Listen as if your children have something important to give to you.

Try to see and feel the situation their way. Listen to understand, rather than to respond. Refrain from expressing your advice and your own experiences.

Remember that accepting and understanding do not mean liking or agreeing. Allow them to have their feelings. Help them label their feelings.

Respect imagination! Acknowledge imaginary playmates. Guide their imagination to be their own source of encouragement!

Mentally join their world and explore possibilities and consequences. The mind is a place to try out new experiences and to gain insights into meeting needs.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Joyce VanTassel-Baska

What can we say about appropriate instructional strategies for gifted learners? We know that many strategies are very successful with these students, and we also know that those same strategies frequently work well with populations of students not identified as gifted. Therefore, what are some special considerations to be given to the issue of instructional strategies? Some principles we might consider when planning our instruction for gifted students are as follows:

Strategies need to relate to instructional purposes, curriculum, and setting.

Effective strategies are dependent on the purpose of a given lesson and the nature of the curriculum being taught. For example, inquiry teaching is very appropriate in many situations, but if the instructional purpose is to provide an overview of key ideas on China in an hour, then it may not be the best choice of strategy. Thus, we must carefully study the interrelationship of strategy with purpose, content, and time frames.

Strategies should be diverse.

Our research on instructional methods for the gifted currently indicate that many different strategies may be successful. Therefore, we should employ a variety of techniques. Small group cooperative learning strategies, independent learning models, and large group instruction all have their place in the instructional pattern for the gifted. Striving for a good balance among the three instructional approaches may be optimal.

Strategies should include several that are generative in nature.

Effective teachers of the gifted rely on strategies that involve the gifted as an active learner, capable of generating new ideas and products of various kinds. Consequently, it is probably appropriate to list a few *key* strategies that *all* teachers of the gifted should have in their arsenal. These include: inquiry, problem-solving, and discussion via careful question-asking techniques. Without such techniques as a regular part of the gifted programs, students are cheated out of an important aspect of their learning.

Strategies should provide a balance among active and passive activities.

While there is much value in having students work independently in the classroom, there is a potential problem in overloading on passive types of activities with them where they are merely receiving information by doing work in isolation. Many of their best insights can be gained from interacting with each other, and articulating ideas verbally. Consequently, educators of the gifted need to consider the balance in the strategies employed.

Strategies should consider cognitive style of both teacher and learners.

The individual learning styles of the gifted call for the need for sensitivity to this issue by teachers. Yet, at the same time, teachers often are superb at one instructional approach and only mediocre at another. Thus, a teacher, too, needs to know her own strengths and try to capitalize upon them in classroom interactions. Recognition of cognitive style and attempts to respond to it help maximize the outcome of learning.

Strategies should be subordinate to the educational purpose.

Occasionally, the strategy becomes the purpose instead of what is taught. For example, brainstorming may become more important than the ideas being considered; we lose sight of *why* the technique is important to employ (as a way of exploring an important idea.) Group process then is not an end in itself but must be tempered by relevant content for exploration.

These principles do not represent an exhaustive list, but they represent important issues to consider in selecting instructional strategies for use with gifted learners. In future columns we shall examine the elements of individual strategies which have been found successful with these students. ■

Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Ed.D. is the Jody and Layton Smith Professor of Education at William and Mary College, in Williamsburg, Virginia. She is editor of Comprehensive Curriculum for Gifted Learners.

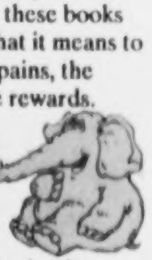
Stephanie S. Tolan

THE READING ROOM

Because few adults are knowledgeable about the vast world of children's literature, the many gifted children who read voraciously may be left on their own when it comes to choosing books. If they are lucky enough to find a librarian or teacher who is aware of their particular interests and preferences, they may be led to books and authors they might not find on their own. If not, they may simply wander the library or bookstore shelves, picking whatever looks interesting. This column is designed to be a "room" where gifted children and their adults can encounter a few titles, a few authors, a few fictional characters that they may find of special interest. Reading is a solitary activity, but that isn't all it has to be. Readers often long to talk about a favorite book with someone else who has read it. *There are chairs of all sizes in this room, and we hope that readers young and not so young will share some of these books and discuss them.*

Over the next few issues we will focus on novels with exceptionally or profoundly gifted characters. Though most literary children's books include bright characters, these include characters who, whether specifically labeled so or not, are at the high end of the gifted range. Consequently, many of the issues for discussion in these books focus specifically on what it means to be gifted, the joys, the pains, the responsibilities and the rewards.

FUNNY BOOKS



If you don't yet know England's Bagthorpe clan, find them today!

Helen Cresswell, a British author of wide talents, has created an entire family of self-styled, self-confessed, self-aggrandizing "geniuses" in the Bagthorpes. (Yes, these characters may lead to an interesting discussion of methods of identification!) All members of the clan (with the exception of Jack, the central figure in the first Bagthorpe book, *Ordinary Jack*, who is convinced that he has no talent whatsoever) have "many strings to their bows," by which they modestly mean they can do almost anything. And what they do best of all is compete--with each other, with the outside world, with various relatives and acquaintances. Their competitions are uniformly hilarious, as are their interactions with each other. Their humor is distinctively British (which may lead young readers onward to Douglas Adams, Monty Python, Fawlty Towers, Dr. Who and other examples of British humor.)

The "Bagthorpe Saga," as it is called, has now grown to six volumes: *Ordinary Jack, Absolute Zero, Bagthorpes Unlimited, Bagthorpes V. The World, Bagthorpes Abroad,* and *Bagthorpes Haunted*. Published in hardback by Macmillan Publishing, they were reprinted in paperback by Avon and are now being reissued by Puffin/Penguin paperbacks. If you want virtuous reasons for reading these hugely enjoyable books, the issues that can be discussed include arrogance, competition, creativity, divergent thinking, family relationships, sibling rivalry, selfishness, what intelligence *really* means, dog training and the dangers of reckless driving.

For families in which reading aloud is the norm, we heartily suggest the Bagthorpes for the reading hour. There is no age limit to the enjoyment of these books, and being able to laugh at them together is an unparalleled family entertainment. The Bagthorpes will readily fill in for any number of prime time hours of family TV viewing or can be a welcome diversion in a long car trip. For families in which reading aloud is *not* the norm, perhaps it is time to begin a tradition.

In future issues we will suggest books by American humorists as well as books with a more serious approach to the issues of "growing up gifted." Also look forward to books from the science fiction or fantasy genre, books for young adults, and books with characters talented in a particular area.■

Stephanie Tolan, from Waterford, New York, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, Guiding the Gifted Child.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT Continued from page 1

A 3 year old, for example, who knows the Latin names of many dinosaurs and can converse articulately about their habitats and behaviors may have difficulty communicating with children who have less knowledge and less verbal skill. A 4 year old who enjoys playing Monopoly and checkers with older children in the neighborhood will have difficulty finding same-age playmates with similar skills and interests. One gifted 4-year-old boy was repeatedly frustrated when his neighborhood friends failed to keep appointments he had made with them; it was difficult for him to accept that they had not yet learned to tell time.

Of course, gifted children are capable of modifying their behavior to fit in with other children. One mother reported that her 4-year-old son wrote a note to hang on the front door, telling his friends that he did not want to play. He then crumpled the note, and sadly explained to his mother, "I can't hang this note up, Mom. They can't read!" Parents can help their gifted children problem-solve to discover techniques for getting along with the neighbors. The preschooler next door may not enjoy playing board games, but might be an excellent companion for tricycle riding.

FINDING TRUE PEERS

When we talk about children getting along with their "peers," we often mean getting along with other children the same age. However, the term "peer" really means others with whom we can interact at an equal level around issues of common interest. For children whose interests and abilities differ markedly from those of others in their age group, finding true peers may be a challenge. For children whose development is highly uneven, true peers may vary depending on the activity. A child with extraordinary intellectual but average physical skills might have one set of peers for reading and discussing books, and another set for riding tricycles and playing ball.

Even though gifted children may develop the skills to get along with many different types of children, special efforts are needed to help them find their true peers in their areas of giftedness. Without such efforts, gifted children may hide their talents, or be labeled as strange and different. One 4-year-old boy was diagnosed as emotionally disturbed by his preschool teachers because of his tendency to withdraw from social interaction. His worried parents enrolled him in a program for highly gifted children, where his friendly, outgoing manner demonstrated that his withdrawn behavior had been the result of having no intellectual peers with whom to interact. Without someone he could talk to, he stopped talking.

> ***The stereotype of the mature, self-directed gifted child sometimes prevents teachers and parents from appreciating the extraordinary intellectual skills of a gifted but wiggly five year old.***

When a gifted child finds a real friend, the child's personality will blossom. Ronald, a gifted 5 year old, explained it well when he commented, "Do you know why Bill is my best friend? Because he's the only one who understands the kind of guy I really am." Parents who make the effort to arrange transportation for frequent visits to the "best friend" who lives across town will be rewarded by their child's joy in the relationship and growing sense of social competence.

BEARING THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD ON YOUNG SHOULDERS

Many gifted children experience unique adjustment problems because their social, cognitive and physical skills have developed at different rates. One effect of this uneven development can be exposure to highly complex, emotionally charged information that the child may not be mature enough to understand. The parent of an intellectually advanced 4 year old described how he came upon his daughter looking terrified as she read the Bible. When he inquired about her concern, she replied, "I'm reading the Book of Revelations, and it's really scary!" Young children who read the newspapers or watch the television news without the life experience to provide a context for understanding global problems may need some help interpreting the events described. Parent explanations and comments concerning television events can help an advanced child sort out the complexities of potentially misunderstood material.

Just being available as a sympathetic listener can be helpful. Many gifted children are unusually sensitive in their emotional response to information about tragedies that have taken place in the world. The parents of a 3-year-old girl described how their daughter was devastated by the explosion of the Challenger shuttle because she had planned to become an astronaut. Her room was plastered with NASA posters and pictures of Sally Ride. An event that for most children her age caused mild interest and concern, for this child forced the realization that her chosen career might mean risking her life. Parent support was critical in helping

(Continued on page 9)

Linda Kreger Silverman

PERSONALITY PLUS

In my counseling work with gifted children and adolescents over the past 25 years, I have found that there is more to giftedness than intellectual advancement. *Gifted children not only think differently from others, they also* **feel** *differently. They are likely to be more sensitive, more easily frustrated, more perfectionistic, more self-critical, more concerned with injustice, more intense and more compassionate.* Here is a quote from a book written by a group of gifted adolescents:

> We are not "normal" and we know it; it can be fun sometimes but not funny always. We tend to be much more sensitive to other people. Multiple meanings, innuendos, and self-consciousness plague us. Intensive self-analysis, self-criticism, and the inability to recognize that we have limits makes us despondent. In fact, most times our self-searching leaves us more discombobbled than we were at the outset. (*On Being Gifted*, 1978, p.9)

This quotation reveals the fears suffered by many--if not most--gifted individuals that their deep feelings make them "abnormal." All who work with the gifted--teachers, counselors, parents, and so forth--need to be aware of the affective side of giftedness so that they can support the emotional needs of these children. It doesn't help when people say, "You're too sensitive," "Don't be so perfectionistic," or "Lighten up." Statements like the following, even made in the spirit of lighthearted fun, only exaggerate the person's feeling "not normal."

"There must be something wrong with me if I feel this way." "Maybe I'm crazy...nobody else seems to be bothered by this but me."

Instead, what does help is a supportive adult who will take the time to listen to these children's feelings, and who can explain that such feelings are "normal" for gifted persons, that they come with the territory. A reassuring adult can dispel children's fears, and help them find ways to cope with their feelings. But the first step is **honoring** those emotions, in boys as well as in girls--making it OK for the feelings to exist. Otherwise, the children are likely to be so worried about "What if I'm crazy?" that they will be afraid to share their feelings and unable to put their energies into positive strategies.

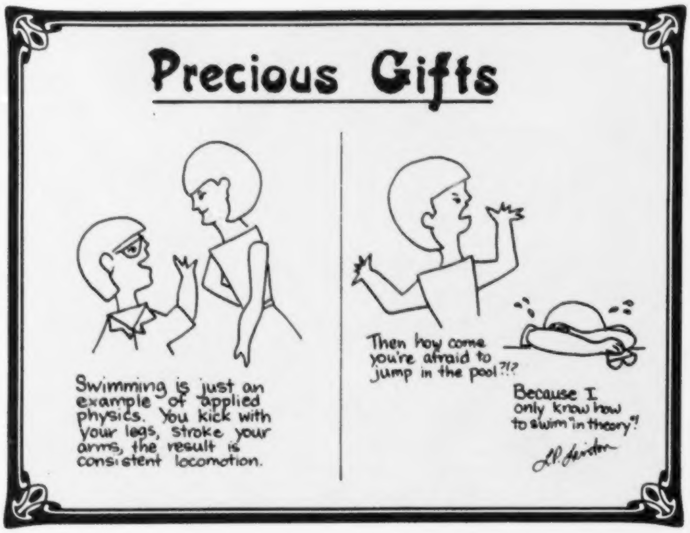
Of course, there are those skeptics who say that giftedness is unrelated to personality factors, since they have met gifted children and adults who seem lacking in sensitivity or compassion for others. I believe that high levels of sensitivity, and the other traits listed, appear with great regularity in the profiles of the gifted, but there are also gifted children who have been damaged. These children are less likely to show compassion, and tend to react defensively in their interactions with others. The fact that some gifted children don't show these personality attributes does not discredit their high incidence in the population. Also, the gifted do not possess exclusive rights to any of these personality traits.

In upcoming columns, I will be discussing various personality qualities that I have found in the gifted, such as moral concern, introversion, emotional depth, and perfectionism, and offer some suggestions for coping effectively with them. ■

REFERENCE

On Being Gifted. American Association for Gifted Children. New York: Walker & Co.

Linda Silverman, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist and Director of the Gifted Child Development Center in Denver, Colorado.


Precious Gifts
Swimming is just an example of applied physics. You kick with your legs, stroke your arms, the result is consistent locomotion.
Then how come you're afraid to jump in the pool?!?
Because I only know how to swim "in theory"!
L.P. Jenston

this child work through the crisis brought about by the precocious development of her commitment to a life's work, her unusual understanding of the implications of the shuttle explosion, and her deep emotional response. Her preschool teachers could not understand the very real impact of this event, and urged her not to "be so sensitive." Without parent support, she would have experienced double stress--feeling guilty about her sensitivity as well as working through her grief. Fortunately, her parents realized the need for sympathetic listening and understanding.

COPING WITH UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Adults and children alike can be misled by advanced abilities in one area to expect equally advanced performance in other areas. For example, a three-year-old may be able to discuss reasons to share and cooperate with others, but when it comes time to hand over her truck to a playmate, age-appropriate reluctance to share may become apparent. Adults, expecting social maturity to match high level intellectual development, may label a highly articulate, logical child as a behavior problem when he or she exhibits an age-appropriate tantrum. "You should know better than to behave that way," an exasperated parent will cry. The child may in fact "know better," but may not have learned how to translate that knowledge into mature social behavior.

Equally damaging is the tendency to view a child's misbehavior as evidence of a lack of intellectual ability. *The stereotype of the mature, self-directed gifted child sometimes prevents teachers and parents from appreciating the extraordinary intellectual skills of a gifted but wiggly five year old.* "She can't be gifted; she never sits still, won't finish her work, is disruptive in class...," goes the complaint. Such children need the emotional nurturance and social guidance appropriate for their chronological age, but in addition require challenge for their intellectual strengths in order to develop a positive self-image with acceptance of their own abilities.

TOLERATING FRUSTRATION

While some gifted young children are physically as well as intellectually advanced, others display the physical awkwardness and lack of coordination typical of their age-mates. Young gifted children can become highly frustrated when their limited physical capabilities prevent the completion of the complex projects created in their extremely adept imaginations. Their expectations for their own performance may be just as unrealistic as some adult expectations. They need sensitive guidance to direct their frustration into constructive problem-solving. Otherwise, they may quickly give up on projects or even avoid starting them.

One technique for helping a child cope with frustration is to **teach deep breathing for relaxation** during times when the child is calm. At the moment of frustration a teacher or parent can suggest to the child that he or she use deep breathing skills before continuing with the project. Another strategy is to talk with the child about those feelings of frustration, help the child understand that these feelings are normal, and that the child can control them by walking away from the project for awhile or by reframing the problem (saying "I need to try another way," rather than "This is impossible and I'm messing it up.").

RESISTING PRESSURE

While gifted children often do put a great deal of pressure on themselves to perform, adults can also contribute to this pressure by expecting consistently high level performance in all endeavors. In fact, one of the most common complaints listed by gifted children from age 7 through 18 has been summarized by Galbraith (1985) as "Parents, teachers, and friends expect us to do our best and be perfect all the time." One parent complained because her daughter, an "A" student and accomplished musician, was not "exerting herself" to be first on the community swimming team. "If she would only try," the parent complained, "she could be the best." The parent failed to recognize that even if the child's ability to perform in swimming was equal to the parent's ambition, her motivation to "be the best" in that area was not.

Adults need to remember that children, particularly those with multiple talents, must make selective decisions about where to invest their time and energy. No one can be the best at everything, even if the talent exists; there simply isn't enough time. Uneven development in talent areas is bound to occur, as much because of differential motivation and opportunity as because of differential talents. Constant criticism over specific performance areas where the child is not "the best" can damage the child's general feelings of competence and self-worth. In addition, such criticism can stifle the child's curiosity and willingness to try new things. Even telling a child "just do your best" can be a daunting challenge if the child's "best" is really Olympic quality swimming or prodigy-level performance on an instrument. A less demanding "just give it a good try" can free the child to try out new skill areas without becoming committed to high level achievement.

In fact, a child may wish to pursue certain activities just for pleasure, without striving for the best. Scouts may be enjoyed for the social experience, without earning every badge in the book. The piano can be played at home, for oneself, without learning to hit every note perfectly. Recreational sports can be just as satisfying as competitive sports, or even more so.

In addition, parents might consider allowing their child a "trial period" for new activities that demand a certain level of skill development to become enjoyable. A parent and child might agree, for example, on a year or two of piano lessons, with the opportunity to reevaluate both the choice of instrument and ongoing involvement in music after the trial period has elapsed.

Parents do have an important role to play in arranging stimulating experiences that encourage talent development. There is a fine line, however, between responding appropriately to a child's interest and pushing a learning experience that an adult has determined is important. Careful observation of children's interests and activities can help parents and teachers design learning environments that offer a wide range of stimulating choices without unrealistic pressure to excel in any one area.

An additional parent concern centers on the fact that sometimes gifted children's skills may not develop in a smooth progression, but rather may evolve in a series of spurts interspersed with plateaux. A child might enter preschool knowing all letters and letter sounds, and leave at the end of the year still not knowing how to read, in spite of numerous opportunities to interact with the written word. At some point in that same child's development he/she may, in a matter of weeks, become a fluent reader. The development of reading skills does not always progress at an even rate. Parents, and even teachers, sometimes become concerned if a child who seems "ready" to read does not progress to actual reading, even though the child is still very young. Adults need to relax and continue to provide a variety of learning experiences. Increased pressure to achieve in specific skill areas will be more likely to delay than to accelerate learning.

BURDENED BY CONSTANT PRAISE

Some parents, eager to avoid pressure or criticism, move to the other extreme. They are so delighted with the exploits of their gifted child that they greet every little accomplishment with lavish praise. Overpraising can have a number of negative effects that can become sources of psychological vulnerability. One consequence is skepticism on the part of the child. One father described how his 4-year-old daughter ran up to him at a time he was busy working to show him a drawing. "Oh, that's beautiful," he commented without paying much attention. He then heard his daughter explain to her friend, "See, I told you he likes scribbles! I don't know why, but he does." Obviously, she had been testing his reaction, and is not likely to value his opinion in the future. When children are exposed too frequently to global evaluations, whether in the form of comments or grades with no feedback, they quickly begin to discount the meaning. An aspiring writer, age 8, commented, *"They keep giving me A's when I know that I can do better."*

Constant praise can also engender the suspicion that parents or teachers are constantly evaluating the child, and that if the child ever falls short, love will be withdrawn. The fear that a parent only loves a child because of the child's accomplishments can be a continuing problem for gifted children. Such children may grow up to feel like impostors, both during their school years and in their adult lives. They begin to believe they have fooled others into thinking they are smart or talented, when, in reality, they "know" they are not nearly as brilliant as others believe. Ever increasing successes must constantly be attained in order to prove personal worth--to feel worthy of love. Children need to feel loved for themselves in order to be able to accept their weaknesses, to learn from their mistakes, and to become comfortable with constructive criticism and errors as a necessary part of appropriately challenging learning. Enjoying family activities together, commenting on a child's warm smile, or just saying "It's really good to see you this morning," can foster the child's feelings of parental acceptance unrelated to particular accomplishments or skills.

Adults have a fine line to walk between praise and encouragement. There is a subtle but important difference between looking at a child's drawing and saying, "That's great," and saying "That's an interesting use of the color blue. The way you put those wavy lines across the middle makes me feel peaceful. You've really been working hard on this picture." The first statement may encourage a belief that everything is either good or bad, and may become internalized as a critical inner voice, constantly evaluating all the child does. The second approach conveys interest and appreciation, and leaves the door open to ongoing communication where the child and the adult might share ideas about the work.

FOSTERING POSITIVE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH

When parents and teachers understand the implications of the differentness inherent in being gifted, they can create conditions that will support the child's positive social and emotional growth. The first step is to realize the inextricable link between social and cognitive development.

Some educators reason that there is no need for special programming for young gifted children because the goal of early childhood education is socialization. A major component of socialization, however, involves a child's feeling that he or she is accepted by others, teachers and children alike. If the teacher does not validate a gifted child's abilities and intellectual interests by including them in the ongoing curriculum, the child begins to wonder about acceptance from the teacher. If the child also makes the discovery that communication with classmates is difficult, and that others do not share his/her vocabulary, skills or interest, peer interactions may prove limited and unsatisfactory. *We cannot ignore the gifted child's need for intellectual stimulation and expect social development to flourish.*

Many gifted young children arrive in the preschool or kindergarten classroom already capable of recognizing and naming numerous colors and shapes, able to count and in some cases to perform arithmetical operations, and extremely knowledgeable about letters and letter sounds. Many read as well as second or third grade children. Some are only challenged by puzzles with 50, 60, or even 100 pieces. Extensive questioning, in-depth exploration of topics, and a passionate thirst for knowledge characterize their learning style. In short, they have mastered the cognitive content of the traditional early childhood program by the time they are 2 years old, and enter school ready and eager to learn concepts usually presented to older children. If opportunities for complex play and advanced conceptual learning are not present in the classroom, the gifted child's energy and excitement about learning may be diverted to nonconstructive behavior. One 3-year-old boy was asked to leave three different preschools before he was enrolled in a program for gifted children. Teachers told his mother that his disruptive behavior could not be contained within their classrooms. Evaluation of his abilities indicated that he was a highly gifted child. A program that offered many different options for intellectual engagement alleviated much of his disruptive behavior. Reduction of boredom and consequent frustration allowed for the development of more positive social skills.

> *For children whose development is highly uneven, true peers may vary depending on the activity*

The best early childhood programs will provide an optimal match between the child's skills and interests and the qualities of the learning situation, with balanced opportunities for rewarding challenge in areas of strength as well as successful development of skills in areas of weakness. Included in the planned curriculum will be an organized program to guide the development of a realistic, positive self-concept and increased interpersonal skills.

Guidance in developing effective interpersonal skills can help children cope with situations where they may be the youngest in a group of older children who offer intellectual stimulation, or the most advanced in a group of average age-mates. *The optimum environment for gifted young children is one that combines sensitively guided social experience with opportunities for enhancement of their advanced intellectual abilities.* Parents can seek out such environments for their children. In addition, parents can provide a safe haven at home, where children can discuss their difficulties, their fears, and their problems in a sympathetic setting. When a young child is outraged because an age-mate didn't follow the rules", or when a teacher seems unfair, or when "nobody will play with me," it helps to be able to explore those feelings expressed, acknowledge the difficulty of the problem, and begin to frame a setting for problem-solving. Questions such as "Why do you think she behaved that way? How do you think he was feeling? What could you do differently the next time? What different things might you try now?" can focus the child on developing effective social strategies, without having the parent step in to solve the problem. Parents can help children use their advanced reasoning skills to figure out ways to solve their social problems, and can then offer support as identified strategies are attempted. By providing their support, acceptance, understanding, and ongoing love, parents can help their gifted child fulfill his or her potential, and, more importantly, find happiness and joy in living.■

REFERENCES

Abroms, K.I. (1983). Affective development. In M.B. Karnes (Ed.), The underserved: Our young gifted children (pp. 118-143). Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Galbraith, J. (1985). The eight great gripes of gifted kids: Responding to special needs. Roeper Review, 8(1), 15-18.

Roedell, W.C., Jackson, N.E., & Robinson, H.B. (1980). Gifted Young Children. New York: Teachers College Press.

Wendy C. Roedell, Ph.D. is Director of the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program at Educational Service District 121 in Seattle, Washington and senior author of Gifted Young Children.

encounter stress, gifted youngsters may exhibit a heightened degree of anxiety in their lives. Due to unrealistic appraisals of their abilities imposed from family, society and self, gifted children may feel that they must perform at high levels of competence in each of their many endeavors. Consider these scenarios:

- A 9 year old comes home with a report card filled with five A's and two B's. Instead of hearing "great job," the child is asked "What happened?"
- A 12 year old who loves school tells his parents he wants to become a teacher. He is told promptly, "With your brains, you could become whatever you want--surely you want to do something more challenging than teaching."
- A 6 year old gets upset that the picture she envisions in her mind can't be reproduced on paper--her fingers won't move fast enough! When she crumples up her picture in frustration, she hears, "I expect better behavior from such a smart little girl."

The above scenes illustrate some possible "starting points" of stress for gifted children. Also, they point out how easy it is, as adults, to notice children for what they *could* achieve rather than *have* achieved. As one 7-year-old girl from New York wrote, "At the beginning of first grade--now I'm in second--I didn't even want to do creative writing because I was afraid I wouldn't write exactly what the teacher wanted and she would say I made a mistake." (Delisle, 1984, p. 49)

***The stress associated with the perception that "gifted child equals perfect child" may enter the social as well as the academic realm*.** For example, when an 8-year-old, who generally acts in a responsible and mature fashion, begins to *act* like an 8-year-old, adults may comment that they "didn't expect such silliness from such a bright child." Also, friends may respond to a gifted child's mistake in such ways as to imbue in the child a sense that s/he must be perfect. Again, from the pens of children:

> All the kids gasp in horror if I get below an 80%.
>
> -Boy, 10, Connecticut
>
> When I make a mistake everybody acts like I suddenly lost my brain. I feel very uncomfortable with this feeling.
>
> -Boy, 10, Georgia
>
> (Delisle, 1984, p. 47)

Children who begin to see themselves as academic or social failures may feel defeated at the slightest hint of human error. As they mature, these same children may develop patterns and lifestyles that avoid any event that may "show off their flaws." As a result, the same youngsters who were identified early in life as being curious, spontaneous and adventurous may participate only in those activities that are psychologically safe and that assure the highest levels of performance. This urgent sense to be perfect, perfect, perfect inhibits one's exploration of the world, and limits one's options to those that are free of psychological risk.

SURVIVING THE TEENAGE YEARS:

Coping With The Stress That Accompanies Adolescence

The word *adolescence* comes from the Latin, *alescere*, meaning "to grow; to be nourished." Surely, parents of most teenagers will attest that their grocery bills give firm evidence of the accuracy of relating adolescence to nourishment! But another type of nourishment is also needed by the growing teen: the nourishment provided by caring adults and friends who allow for mistakes, flaws, and imperfections.

The gifted teenager is often confronted with the same confusion felt by most adolescents. For example, the able teen might wish to do well academically, but may be enrolled in a school where such achievement is frowned upon by peers. Also, the gifted teen may understand the abstract concept that "friendship" is different from "popularity," but still feel the pangs of a Saturday night without a date. Intellectual acuity in no way assures an equally high level of social or emotional competence, but the gifted teenager who dismisses the "gut feelings" of wanting to be good looking, popular, or well-liked may begin to dismiss these aspects of adolescence as trivial or meaningless. However, as explained by one teenager,

> Companionship and peer stimulation, those mundane necessities, are just that, necessities...I've learned that I'm a lot more human that I ever thought I was.
>
> (American Association for Gifted Children, 1978, p. 114)

At times, gifted adolescents who feel they are "failing" in the social arena may begin to focus exclusively on their areas of cognitive strength. Then, whether the subject is computers, chemistry or calculus, the student will feel successful; and human nature being what it is, this highly able teen will continue to enjoy academic success, and benefit from the praise that frequently follows from adults. Such a success orientation is not necessarily bad, but if the student's pursuits are exclusively academic, these achievements may be won at a very high price: the inability to interact comfortably with one's age-mates. What starts as an

(Continued on page 15)

Kathi Kearney

THE HIGHLY GIFTED

- Meghan, age 4, eagerly reads all the volumes of the Little House series, books usually read by children five or six years older than she.
- Alan, age 7, completes in a childish scrawl all the exercises in a college-level introductory algebra test, with only incidental tutoring from his teacher and parents.
- 8-year-old Veronica is in tears after reading an excerpt from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and responds by composing a poem detailing her personal reaction to the injustices of slavery.
- Martha is a full-time college student--at the age of 10.

What do these children have in common? All are exceptionally gifted, sharing the characteristics of an extremely high intellect, a heightened sensitivity to the world around them and to larger moral issues, and discrepancies in development which mark the normal pattern of development for the highly gifted in early childhood. In addition, in most cases they (and their parents) also face the challenge of finding educational programs that meet their needs.

Highly gifted children include those who score extremely high on individually administered IQ tests (generally three or more standard deviations above the norm, or in the 145 to 150+ IQ range, depending on the test used), as well as child prodigies in areas such as music, mathematics, or chess, children with extremely developed talents in unusual areas, and profoundly intellectually gifted children above 170 IQ.

These children are very rapid learners, especially in areas of strong interest, often outstripping the knowledge of their teachers and the resources of the curriculum or the local library. As a result of their accelerated intellectual development, they often must cope with discrepancies between their intellectual abilities and understanding and their physical, social, and emotional growth. **The practical consequence of these discrepancies in development within the family may be a child who is able to discourse with you about Einstein's theory of relativity one minute, but insists that she will not eat her vegetables the next!**

At school, the highly gifted first-grader may be able to create an elaborate science fiction story with an extensive plot, but not yet have the motor skills that allow him to express his ideas in writing at anywhere near the speed that those thoughts are developing in his mind. He has the ideas of a 10 year old, but the fingers of a 6 year old! This can be a frustrating experience, although such discrepancies are *normal* in the highly gifted child, and are to be expected. In time, they lessen. Dr. Leta Hollingworth, a pioneer in the study of highly gifted children, states:

> It is especially to be noted that many of these problems are functions of immaturity. To have the intelligence of an adult and the emotions of a child combined in a childish body is to encounter certain difficulies. It follows that (after babyhood) the younger the child, the greater the difficulties, and that adjustment becomes easier with every additional year of age. The years between four and nine are probably the most likely to be beset with the problems mentioned...By the time a gifted person is physically mature, many of the problems... automatically disappear as problems. (Hollingworth,1942, p. 282-283)

Helping the highly gifted child to understand and accept these discrepancies as a normal part of his or her own personal pattern of development, and teaching the child ways of compensating for these discrepancies can increase the child's self-esteem and reduce the frustration that these discrepancies sometimes cause.

In future columns, we will explore other areas of special concern for the highly gifted child, including testing and identification, school placement, family growth and development, advocacy and legislative change, and the unique developmental issues and concerns faced by the children themselves.■

REFERENCE

Hollingworth, Leta S. (1942) Children Above 180 IQ Stanford-Binet: Origin and Development. Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York: World Book Company.

Kathi Kearney is Director of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in Auburn, Maine, a resource teacher, and editor of Highly Gifted Children.

Felice Kaufmann

HOME STRETCH

Ideas for Home Enrichment

Creativity is a word that is often used both in and out of education circles. We hear of creative people, creative writing, creative dramatics and the like. As parents, you have no doubt encountered this word in the titles of toys or books such as Creative Playthings or "10 Creative Activities for a Rainy Day." You also may have heard the word "creative" used to describe your child.

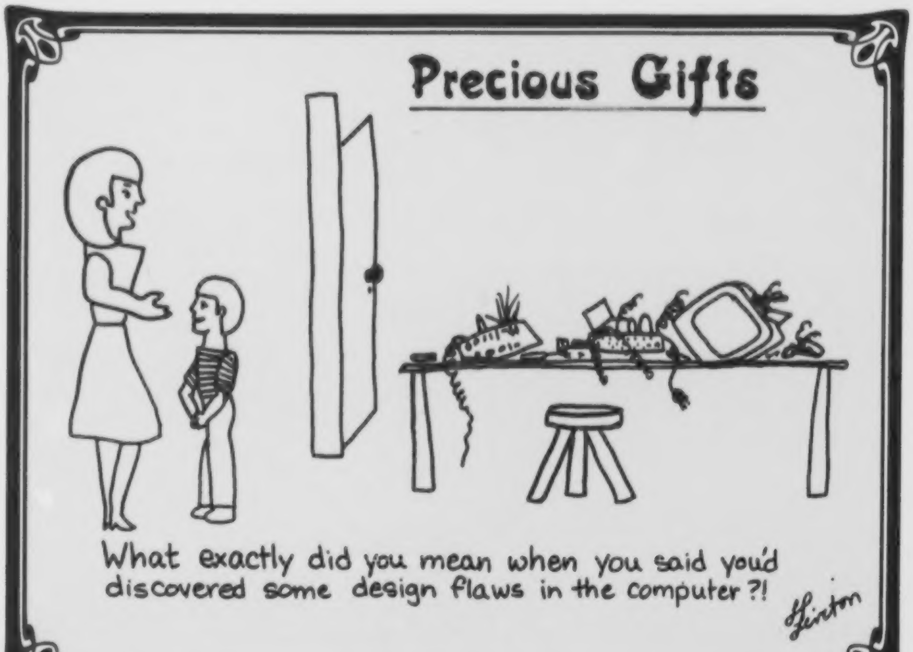
While there are many definitions of this tantalizing concept, the one that seems most relevant to home application is the definition of creativity as a set of skills that can be taught and practiced. These skills include certain types of thinking and particular attitudes and beliefs, all of which you can model in your daily life.

For example, by encouraging your children to make a very long list of ways to entertain themselves on a long car trip, you are stimulating fluent and flexible thinking (as well as saving your sanity!) By asking them to think of unusual ways to occupy themselves on a rainy afternoon, you are supporting originality. When you help them pursue an unpopular stand on a topic or try something they have never tried before, you are assisting them in risk taking. And when you allow them to tackle complicated problems and dream up future solutions, you are developing their preferences for complexity and imagination.

Of course, the best method of enabling children to be more creative is to make your own creative development a high priority (**remember, you are probably the most influential teacher your child will ever have!**) When was the last time *you* tried to learn a new skill or publicly voiced a minority opinion? Have you asked any good questions lately? Or acted in a way that made your friends say "It's just not like you..."?

Creativity training at home can be hard work for you and your children, but it can also be fun and challenging. It literally depends on how you look at things. ■

Felice Kaufmann , Ph.D., is a consultant on the gifted from Lexington, Kentucky who has studied the Presidential Scholars. She is also a Visiting Professor at the University of Kentucky.


Precious Gifts
What exactly did you mean when you said you'd discovered some design flaws in the computer?!
Linton

STRESS Continued from page 12

academic venture may become an excuse (albeit a very "responsible" excuse) for avoiding peer group interaction.

The solution, of course, is "**balance**." For just as a teacher or parent would be concerned if a teenager sidestepped all academic activities in deference to a chock-full social calendar, so should there be concern when the reverse is true. This is *not* to say that teens should be pushed and prodded into social situations that they find distasteful; the point is, though, that academic stress may be hard to avoid if the only vehicle for relaxation is other academic endeavors.

CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT THAT PROMOTES SELF-ASSURANCE

The home and school environments are the best places to affect changes that will help the gifted child or teen to grow into a fully-functioning person. Indeed, parents and teachers have both the ability and the experience to create a climate that promotes success--but not at the child's emotional or social expense. Outlined below are several suggestions for dealing with stress in gifted children.

Remember what learning really is

Within the past decade, there has been an increased emphasis in schools on accountability. Perhaps more now than in any other time in recent memory, students at all levels (and their teachers) are needing to prove their academic competency via various standardized tests. Ironically, this back-to-basics movement has done more harm than good for gifted students, as textbooks and classroom lessons have often emphasized the very lowest level of knowledge acquisition. The prevailing attitude seems to be, "If it can't be tested, it shouldn't be taught". As one author commented recently,

> There is probably nothing wrong with using tests as a way of finding out what students have learned. But tests are no longer merely the measure of learning; they have become the reason for learning.
>
> (Chance, 1988; p.21)

Against this backdrop of increased testing, parents of gifted students need to remember that the ultimate question of competence is not "What d'ya get?" but is, rather, "What d'ya learn?". Parents need to share with their children the importance of learning for the sake of learning--of discovering and explaining facets of our world that cannot be measured by paper-and-pencil tests. Parents can model this attitude by sharing with their children some "adventures in learning"--attendance at cultural events; nature exploration; family discussions about education, religion, philosophy; and even quiet strolls on a beach, by a stream, or in one's own backyard.

Learning occurs 24 hours a day, and it is seldom confined to topics included between the covers of textbooks. By showing your children the value and enjoyment of education in its many dimensions, the stress involved in "book learning" is better kept in balance.

Praise efforts, not just achievements

Children, like adults, enjoy those activities in which they feel successful. Whether the subject is dinosaurs or decimals, if a child can notice his or her own achievement, s/he is most likely to continue pursuing this interest.

However, some gifted children concentrate on one topic to the exclusion of all others. While this is not always negative in adults--for example, we prize specialization--it can *become* negative if students refuse to pursue new topics for fear that they won't do a perfect job. This desire for perfection is common in gifted students, but according to Joanne Whitmore (1980), (an expert on the area of underachievement), this perfectionistic tendency can stifle one's desire to try new experiences. Also, since many gifted children tend to measure their self-worth by their educational performance, any perceived failure may lower a child's self-esteem. The end result can be very bright children who, though very capable, consider themselves as failures unless they achieve at the highest levels. In an attempt to safeguard their self-concept, then, these vulnerable children may refuse to participate in any activity in which perfection is not assured.

Parents can help relieve this stress in several ways. First, they must understand that their child's perceived fear is very real for that child, and they must not dismiss the child's feelings with comments like "Oh, don't worry, you'll do fine." Next, parents can encourage their child to pursue new topics by discussing some of the fears that often remain unstated:

> "I know that it's a risk to take the Advanced English course; let's talk about whether you'll be comfortable with the extra workload."
>
> "It's hard to do a six-week independent study project. Let's come up with a few specific things you could do between this week and next week."
>
> "To be honest, getting an A in this course might not be realistic. Let's keep in mind that this whole subject is new to you."

By stating that you, as a parent, understand both your child's desire to do well and his/her fear of failing, you make the climate safer for exploration of new topics. Also, by setting weekly or short-term goals with your child, you will be able to note success in small increments, and will be able to re-set goals that might have been too ambitious or lofty.

Model the behaviors and attitudes you want your children to adopt

At times, parents "talk a good game" to their children about how it is they should lead their lives. Unfortunately, this advice can often be seen by the children as a "Do as I say, not as I do" lifestyle, as the same parents who coax their children to try new projects are, themselves, secure only when they are involved in topics in which they are well-versed. When the parents' words do not mesh with their actions, gifted children will often pick up on these discrepancies, and act according to what they *see*, not what they *hear* from their parents.

To counteract the confusion often resulting from such discrepancies, parents can do much to show their able children that, in fact, they do mean what they say. For example: ***When you make a mistake in your own life, react in such ways that show your children that mistakes, though unpleasant, need not be devastating.*** Say things like,

> "Boy, I feel silly when my checkbook balance differs from the bank's; it's nice that one quick phone call to the bank can clear this up."

Or, if your favorite recipe fails, a comment like,

> "That's the last time I'll trust an old family recipe!" is much better than "I'm so stupid that I can't even follow directions from a simple recipe!"

The point is, if you're going to convince your children that "mistakes are OK", then you've got to *show* them, not just *tell* them.

Participate in events that allow your flaws and imperfections to be seen. Sure, it can be embarrassing to be the shortstop at the family picnic when you've always had trouble fielding baseballs, but when you participate in activities where your *attempts* do not always end in *successes*, you show your children that less than perfection is more than acceptable.

> ***When you make a mistake in your own life, react in such ways that show your children that mistakes, though unpleasant, need not be devastating.***

Discuss with your children the misconceptions that society often has about gifted persons. Intellectually capable persons have strengths and weaknesses and likes and dislikes just as all other people do. Don't let society put a "gifted label" on them to the extent of shutting them out of everyday things. Allow them to explore the nuances of life, regardless of their likelihood of achieving a high grade or a flawless performance. Also, allow for "downtime": pizza with friends, bubblebaths, comic books. We can learn as much in free time and social situations as we do in academic environments.

CONCLUSION

Stress is a part of everyday life. *As our world grows more complex, and events that once seemed so distant are now as close as the nearest TV, bright children begin to see that we are all global citizens, whatever our country of origin.*

Inevitably, our children look to us, their parents and teachers, for guidance, knowledge and reassurance. If they see us in a continuous frenzy, enrapt in careers, and in constant need of "a few days off," our children learn that life is a whirlwind series of obligations and promises to keep. If, however, we present a balance between work and play, laughter and tears, time-on-task and time for daydreaming, they learn that **success is measured not so much by what we have accomplished, but by what we have attempted.** ■

REFERENCES

American Association for Gifted Children. (1978). On being gifted. NY: Walker and Company

Chance, P. (1988, May). Testing education. Psychology Today, pp. 20-21.

Delisle, J.R. (1984). Gifted children speak out. New York: Walker and Company.

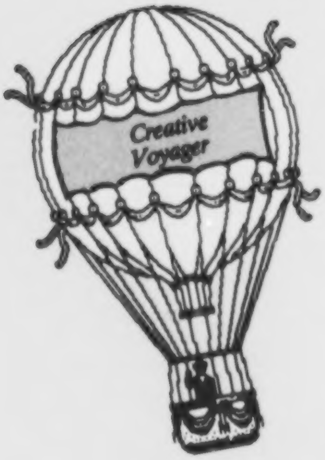
Whitmore, J.R. (1980). Giftedness, conflict and underachievement. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

James Delisle, Ph.D., is Coordinator of Gifted Education, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio and author of Gifted Children Speak Out.

To try and fail is
at least to learn;
to fail to try is to suffer the
inestimable loss of what
might have been.

-Chester Barnard-

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY



Creative Ventures And Encounters

Jerry Flack
Tour Guide

Welcome aboard the Creative Voyager.

I will be serving as your tour guide on a series of ventures, voyages, and encounters as we seek ways to develop and enhance the creativity of our gifted youth. Some of our adventures may be conducted in the home; others will more likely occur in the classroom. *All of the journeys will be opportunities for discovering and finding out new and exciting things about yourselves while simultaneously helping gifted children and adolescents develop their creative potential and productivity.*

BIRTHDAY TIME CAPSULES

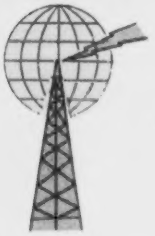
Our first exploration asks you to look backward in time. Begin a dinner table conversation by asking your daughter, Mandy, to name the *most* important day in her life. Explore and discuss major events in her life. Ask her to explain the choices of days. Such probes assist the development of good reasoning skills. The ultimate answer you are hoping for in this exercise is the day she was born. Next, ask Mandy what she knows about this particular day. What was happening in the world the day she made her appearance on the scene? Brainstorm all the questions which can be posed to learn more about her special day and date of birth.

Birthday Brainstorming Suggestions

- What news events dominated the headlines?
- What happened in the worlds of sports and popular entertainment?
- What were the consumer prices of groceries, clothing, and other basic items?
- Who held the offices of mayor, governor, president?
- What was happening in the "Peanuts" comic strip?
- What famous events occurred on the same day of the year throughout history?
- Where were siblings and grandparents and what were they doing?

Next, ask Mandy to consider all the ways she might locate answers for all the questions generated. The library will be a prime source of information. Most public libraries have microfilm copies of the *New York Times* and local newspapers covering a span of several decades. News, sports, entertainments, and consumer prices can be researched using this tool. Bound volumes of magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* will provide further information. Interviews may provide the child with further information. What questions can Mandy ask her grandparents to gain further information about events of her special day in history?

Once the list of questions and resources is determined, you and Mandy can share the excitement and thrill of discovering the answers. Mandy is simultaneously acquiring new library and research skills. When all the information is gathered, Mandy's creativity can really take wing as she devises an original way to package all the information. Perhaps she could weave all the information about her special day into a



ANTENNA. . . .

Current Developments in Gifted Education

A new column in a new newsletter--a writer's challenge!

In preparation for this exciting venture I reviewed recent publications and listed the issues: early identification, emotional development, creativity, effective parenting, differentiated curriculum, underachievement, IQ testing etc. etc. etc. ...all current and critical topics in gifted education. But I struggled with the selection of *the* topic that would be most appropriate for launching this column and this newsletter.

As I vacillated, my thoughts wandered back to a long-ago time in gifted education when we did not have such an abundance of research to peruse....And then I was amidst my well-used collection of old material on the gifted. I reread early copies of several now renowned journals, my college text by Maurice Freehill, Lewis Terman's studies and Leta Hollingworth's work. The publications were skinnier. Educators knew less then about how children develop and learn and what makes them gifted. The national network was sparse, and international links were almost non-existent.

But the issues were the same! *The basic concerns of educators and parents for our gifted children have not changed in all those years.* Terminology has been refined, but we still seek the answer to how best to realize the potential of our brightest youth.

In 1961, Freehill stated that "their uniqueness makes it impossible to prescribe one curriculum, one method, or one activity which is 'right' for all gifted people." According to a 1972 report to the United States Congress, "For many years, interested educators, responsible legislators, and concerned parents have puzzled over the problem of educating the most gifted of our students in a public educational program geared primarily to a philosophy of egalitarianism."

More recently, Harry Passow has declared that,

> "...many, if not most, of the issues and questions raised in our 1955 publication, *Planning for Talented Youth*, are still current and applicable...I think that the considerations are perennial ones that gifted educators must *always* attend to and that we now have much better knowledge, understandings and insights with which to deal with these issues and problems."

And so this initial column addresses a timeless concern for gifted children. The journey toward recognition, individualization and nurturing has been uphill but forward. In future publications we intend to focus on the results of progress made through decades of effort to understand our gifted. ■

REFERENCES

Freehill, M.F. (1961). Gifted children. NY: Macmillan Co.

Marland, S. Jr. (1972). Education of the gifted and talented. Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office

Passow, A.H. (1986). Reflections on three decades of education of thegifted. Roeper Review, 8(4), 223-226.

Dorothy Knopper is a consultant on the gifted from Boulder, Colorado and "Open Forum" columnist for Roeper Review.

---

narrative poem, or produce an audio cassette featuring simulated newscasts, entertainment, and advertisements which could have been heard by radio listeners on her special day. She might replicate *Time* magazine's *Woman of the Year* issue featuring herself on the cover.

The time capsule exercise is a great sharing experience for a parent and child. A wonderful alternative adventure is to have the child secretly research and prepare a time capsule for a parent, grandparent, or sibling. The resultant product makes a personal gift of love for a child to present for a birthday or other special occasion.

A FINAL SUGGESTION. The subject of the time capsule does not have to be born yet. If Mandy is soon going to be welcoming a new sibling or cousin into the family, one way to help her feel a part of the welcoming committee is to assign her the task of being the family historian for a day. Prepare her for the task by brainstorming and discussing all the types and sources of information she can gather the day of the upcoming birth. When the big day arrives, she can collect all the day's news and events, write a letter or poem of welcome, package all the materials creatively, and deliver them to the new mother for safekeeping, perhaps suggesting a future target date for the opening and sharing of the contents. ■

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Gifted Education at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs and editor of G/T News.

Linda Sinclair

from parent to parent

Bridging The Gap Between Home School and Public School

Mary and Bill Turner have bridged the gap between public schools and home schooling with home stimulation--letting 8-year-old Roger's interests lead the family into enrichment activities beyond the scope of school.

"We have done a lot of outside-the-classroom enrichment with Roger, and it has been working out very well," said Mary Turner of Englewood, Colorado. "Whether he had been born gifted or not, we would probably have done the same thing...it's just our style."

A recent example is the family's trip to the Air Force Museum in Ohio last summer, which combined a visit with extended family and a unique opportunity to explore Roger's fascination with World War II airplanes.

"We have tried to give him as much enrichment as possible," said Bill. "Such as summer programs at the zoo, athletics, travel and the University for Youth (a formal Gifted and Talented enrichment program at the University of Denver). Whenever possible, we try to cater to his interests."

Some of the programs specifically designed for gifted and talented children have been disappointing, because Roger did not find them challenging. Mary and Bill have had more success with the programs they have devised at home. Recently, they have found a mentor for Roger.

"We have a friend who is interested in airplanes," said Mary. "He has shared books, tapes and slides from museums he has visited with Roger. He has become a special adult friend for Roger. Roger can relate to him, and while it is not a heavy-duty mentorship, it has been very good for Roger to have someone with the same interests."

Both Mary and Bill agree home stimulation does not replace formal schooling.

"We are not doing any of these activities in lieu of sending him to school," said Bill. Mary added, "There is not a real gifted program at school, so our big emphasis has been in outside interests." ■

Linda Sinclair is a freelance writer from Denver, Colorado and parent of a highly gifted child.

Parent to Parent is your forum for sharing ideas with other parents of gifted children. We want to hear your story--what has worked, or not worked, for your family. Please send your name, address, and phone number to *Understanding Our Gifted*, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122, and we will contact you for details.

Understanding Our Gifted™

Don't Delay. Return This Order Form Today!

[ ] New Subscriber

[ ] Gift Subscription (for your friends, teachers, relatives)

[ ] VISA   [ ] MASTERCARD

Card #____________________

Expiration Date________________

____
Signature

YES! Start my subscription to Understanding Our Gifted™. Payment is enclosed or charge my VISA or MASTER CARD. (Just $30 a year). NO RISK GUARANTEE: *If at any time you decide Understanding Our Gifted is not for you, write 'cancel' across the label and return it for a full refund of all unmailed issues.*

NAME____

COURTESY OF (if gift) __________________________

ADDRESS ______________________________________

CITY________________STATE__________ZIP_______

Make checks payable to SNOWPEAK PUBLISHING, INC.™, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122 (303) 798-0986

THE BULLETIN BOARD

This space is for you!

Are you homeschooling a highly gifted child in a rural community and want to contact someone else doing the same?

Do you have an 8-year-old child with a computer who is looking for a computer pal?

Are you an isolated parent of a gifted/handicapped child in need of a support group?

We are happy to use THE BULLETIN BOARD in any way that will serve you. This will enable you to support each others needs. Send us your request and we'll print it on the bulletin board as space permits.

Here are parents of highly gifted children looking for other families with whom to communicate--

- John and Deborah Korsmo
  4335 Tyrol Crest
  Golden Valley, MN 55416
- David and Frankie Ramsden
  2327 Gnarled Oak Avenue
  Lutz, FL 33549

Here are two contacts if you have a highly gifted child and are looking for a support network--

- Kathi Kearney
  Hollingworth Center for
  Highly Gifted
  49 Gamage Avenue
  Auburn, ME 04210
- Julie and Winfield Kindel
  11084 Newland Steet
  Broomfield, CO 80020

NEXT ISSUE

FOCUS:

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

THE QUESTION OF EARLY READERS
Nancy Ewald Jackson

ROLES, RULES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Joan Ellenhorn

RECOGNIZING GIFTEDNESS IN YOUNG CHILDREN
Martin T. Rogers and Linda Silverman

> *Throughout the millennia of history, it has been the normal experience of mankind that only a few of the gifted individuals in a population have had the chance to develop their gifts. Generally speaking, individuals whose gifts have been discovered and cultivated have been as chance outcroppings of precious rock, while the great reserves of human talent lay undiscovered below.*
>
> *-J.W. Gardner-*

UNDERSTANDING
OUR
GIFTED™
P.O. Box 3489
Littleton, CO 80122

BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
Littleton, CO
Permit No. 493

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED™

Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

Volume 1, Issue 2

November 1988

The Gift of Early Reading Ability

Nancy Ewald Jackson, Ph.D.

In the 1950's, parents of preschoolers were warned not to teach their children to read, lest they teach the wrong thing or ruin the child's eyesight. Today's parents receive mixed messages. Some authorities caution against hurrying a child into early formal instruction (Elkind, 1981), while others advocate beginning reading instruction in infancy with flash cards and labels on household objects. Parents of a young child who has been identified as intellectually gifted may wonder whether their child should be reading by the age of four or five. Parents of unusually early readers may wonder whether this achievement means that their child is gifted or whether the school system will be able to cope with the child's precocious skills. The purpose of this article is to summarize some of the research evidence that bears on these questions.

How Is Reading Early Related To Intellectual Giftedness?

Children who are high in general intelligence are more likely to be early readers than are children of average intellectual *(Continued on page 8)*

INSIDE

FOCUS ON:

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

SPECIAL FEATURE:

Recognizing Giftedness in Young Children
Martin T. Rogers, and Linda K. Silverman 5

The Hidden Gifted Learner
Suzanne Perry 3

Parenting The Gifted
Elizabeth Meckstroth 4

Instructional Strategies
JoyceVanTassel-Baska .. 6

The Reading Room
Stephanie Tolan............. 7

Personality Plus
Linda Silverman 11

The Highly Gifted
Kathi Kearney.................14

Bright Beginnings
Martha Morelock...........18

Creative Ventures And Encounters
Jerry Flack.......................19

Current Developments in Gifted Education
Dorothy Knopper...........21

Legislative Review
Jana Waters.....................22

From Parent to Parent
Linda Sinclair..................23

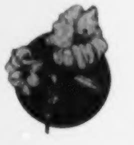
Rules, Roles, and Responsibilities

Joan H. Ellenhorn, Ed.D.

We are often cautioned to remember that a gifted child is a child first and gifted second although it seems at times as if their giftedness affects all they do. However, as parents and educators interacting with gifted children, we need to be aware of the special needs deriving from their gifts and talents, as well as the needs they have in common with all children. One characteristic of the gifted is their almost automatic questioning of the rules. This omnipresent trait, the variety of roles they play in school and family life, and the responsibilities we have as adults interacting with them, are all crucial to the way they develop and mature.

Questioning Rules

Rules exist, as we know, to enable people, events, and forces to operate efficiently, fairly, speedily or a combination of these. Young gifted children begin at an early age to question why things must be done in certain ways and why they must conform to certain rules. If the answers to their questions don't satisfy them they may ignore the rule or argue it endlessly. Usually, however, they respond to being given a rationale or, at least, *(Continued on page 12)*



FROM THE EDITOR

I am so pleased with the responses we have received to the premier issue of the newsletter. We have been besieged with calls and letters of congratulations. We even received a box of our favorite chocolates (dark chocolate, of course!)—thanks, Jerry. Our goal was to put together a first class publication that would meet the needs of both parents and professionals. Judging from the responses we have gotten from both of these sectors, we're off to a good start. Many thanks to all of you who have written. I wish I had time to write a personal letter to each of you. The best I can do is respond to some of you through this editorial column.

Our first letter came from Elaine Derbenwick, a TAG Resource teacher in Air Academy District 20 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Elaine writes:

> *I'm excited about your newsletter! Please help us as teachers help parents understand that gifted kids can lead happy lives in public schools where appropriate extensions and programs are provided...perhaps I teach in Nirvana in District 20, but I do see much being done for the betterment of education for the gifted – all kinds of gifted... Please provide a support system for teachers and parents so cooperative learning can take place. The responsibility of educating the gifted must be shared...*

Elaine, our newsletter began as a collaboration between parents and professionals, and we are deeply committed to supporting cooperation between home and school. I often tell groups about your school district, because it exemplifies the high levels of collaboration that are possible. Many children from your district have been referred for testing to the Gifted Child Development Center (a private assessment center over an hour away from Colorado Springs). The recommendation often comes from your administrative office. When we've gone over the test results with the families, on several occasions three professionals from your district have been present, creating the opportunity for a comprehensive staffing. These representatives included the child's teacher, the TAG resource teacher and either the principal or the school psychologist. All have been released from their responsibilities during school hours to make the trip.

I've also been invited to your district several times to assist teachers in working with children with special needs. When a family felt that their child was not happy in your school district and wanted to enroll him in a private school, District 20's TAG coordinator and the child's TAG resource teacher accompanied the parents to visit several private schools for the gifted in Denver to help find the right placement for the child. This level of commitment to meeting the needs of children transcends the traditional boundaries. In District 20, the needs of the child clearly come first.

Maybe Elaine does teach in Nirvana, or maybe other districts all over the United States are helping gifted children in similar ways. Let's hear from those of you who have broken through the barriers so that others can be inspired to do the same. Please send us examples of successful home/school collaborations in your community. The creative possibilities are limitless.

Linda Silverman

Understanding Our Gifted™

Published by: Snowpeak Publishing, Inc.™

Publisher
Linda Mancini

Editor
Dr. Linda Kreger Silverman

Cartoonist
Linda Leviton

Column Editors
Dr. Felice Kaufmann, *University of Kentucky*

Dorothy Knopper, *State Consultant on the Gifted, Colorado Department of Education*

Martha Morelock, *Department of Education, Tufts University*

Dr. Suzanne Perry, *Aurora Public Schools in Colorado*

Linda Sinclair, *Freelance Writer, Denver, Colorado*

Stephanie Tolan, *Author and Consultant, Waterford, New York*

Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska, *College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia*

Jana Waters, *Associate Director, Gifted Child Development Center, Denver, Colorado*

Advisory Board
Dr. Nicholas Colangelo, *University of Iowa*

Dr. James Delisle, *Kent State University*

Dr. Jerry Flack, *University of Colorado, Colorado Springs,* **Column Editor**

Dr. Holly Hultgren, *University of Denver*

Dr. Nancy Jackson, *University of Washington*

Kathi Kearney, *Director, Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children, Auburn, Maine* **Column Editor**

Elizabeth Meckstroth, *Counselor and Author, Dayton, Ohio* **Column Editor**

Dr. Wendy Roedell, *Director, Early Childhood Ed. and Asst. Program, ESD 121, Seattle, Washington*

Dr. Annemarie Roeper, *Co-Founder of the Roeper City and Country School*

Understanding Our Gifted, a _SNOWPEAK_ publication, (ISSN 1040-1350) is published bimonthly by Snowpeak Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122. Subscriptions are $30 for 1 year (6 issues). Back issues/single copies are $6.50. Canadian subscriptions are $35.00 U.S. Foreign subscriptions are $37.50 U.S. Third class postage paid at Littleton, CO. Subscription inquiries should be sent to the publishing office. For subscription address changes, send mailing label along with new address to _UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED_, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO, 80122, eight weeks before moving. Material in _Understanding Our Gifted_ may be copied for personal use only. No material may be reproduced for publication without written permission of author and publisher. Appropriate credit must be given. **Copyright 1988, SNOWPEAK PUBLISHING, INC. All rights reserved.**

Suzanne M. Perry

THE HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

The Hearing Impaired Gifted Learner

"Sarah, you're daydreaming again," the teacher admonished from the back of the room. Even though it was perfectly true, Sarah made no response. It could have been that her hearing aids just hadn't adequately sorted the teacher's voice from the background noise at that distance and she really hadn't heard him. Maybe her stillness indicated an engrossment in her thoughts or perhaps it was just an expression of futility. Why even pretend to be able to decode, much less interpret the sophomore government text? It wasn't that Sarah lacked intellectual ability– in fact with a tested IQ of 148 she was probably more intellectually capable than anyone in the class. Rather, Sarah was up against the frustrating dichotomy of potential versus specific ability faced by children who fall within the population of hidden or silent gifted. These special needs gifted learners, who include gifted learning disabled students, other cultural gifted students, gifted females, gifted underachievers and physically disabled gifted learners, require differentiated provisions, even within an already differentiated gifted program, to get the most out of learning.

The Hurdles

In the case of hearing impaired gifted learners, there are several hurdles to surmount before their special abilities are even recognized. Mythology that is pervasive even today suggests that hearing impaired individuals are not as intelligent because they may use incorrect sentence structure, often have a limited vocabulary and can be difficult to understand. Actually these limitations bear no relation to intellect. Instead they evolve because speech and language are not heard as well so they do not develop naturally. In truth, the hearing impaired population has the same distribution of intelligence as the normal hearing population.

In addition, the traditional instructional focus for hearing impaired students, as well as for most other handicapped children has been on remediating deficits rather than capitalizing on strengths and abilities (Maker, 1981). A national study (Gamble, 1985) revealed that only 15% of the total estimated group of hearing impaired gifted students in the United States had been enrolled in special programs for the gifted.

The Possibilities

Despite the obstacles facing hearing impaired gifted learners, various provisions by teachers and parents can be made to emphasize and enhance their abilities, whether formal gifted programming is available or not. *(See list on page 15.)*

I can picture Sarah in another government classroom. This time she is standing in front of the class sharing the project she researched about the three branches of government. She is working from one of her strengths now and the assignment makes sense to her. She is an active participant in the class. With the support of her teacher, she has cleared the hurdles and moved on to the world of possibilities. ■

REFERENCES

Gamble, H. (1985). A national survey of programs for intellectually and academically gifted hearing impaired students, *American Annals of the Deaf*, (December), 508-513.

Maker, J. (1981). Gifted hearing-impaired students. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *126*, 631-645.

Suzanne Perry, Ph.D., is Instructional Resource for Project Think in the Aurora Public Schools in Colorado, and author of the children's book, *Giftedness: Living with it and Liking it.*

Elizabeth Meckstroth

PARENTING

It's Good To Grow Up

Andy was in our counseling session because his father heard him say, "I don't want to grow up" again. In exploring Andy's feelings, he explained, "I don't want to grow up because when I grow up I'll have to go to work and my dad doesn't like his work." His parents were quite relieved and had instant insight into how Andy got this impression. Dad used his first minutes home as a safe place to unload his troubles.

Just as our astute children absorb our language, we teach them our values, attitudes, and personal habits. *Perhaps the most important thing we can teach them is that it is good to grow up.* Paul Torrance found that having a mentor is a greater predictor of success than intelligence or creativity. Parents are built in mentors! Two of the most valued life goals of gifted children are self-respect and happiness. If our children see that we are not self-respecting and happy, will they want to emulate us?

Parents of gifted children tend to "overinvest" in their gifted child (Cornell, 1984). David Mellberg, a psychologist at St. Olaf's College, offers parents the hindsight he has learned from bright students there: "I feel like I'm my parents' report card " and, "Tell parents to have their own dreams." Possibly, we would be making a greater contribution to our family if we also invested in our own sense of self-respect and happiness. ■

REFERENCE

Cornell, D. (1984). *Families of gifted children.* Ann Arbor, MI: U.M.I. Research Press.

Elizabeth Meckstroth is a therapist and consultant in Dayton, Ohio and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child.*

We teach what we are and we can only give what we are. Here are some possibilities that could help you honor the qualities of yourself that your children may choose to emulate:

- Use stressful situations as stepping stones to greater awareness.
- Strive to make the situation work *for* you instead of against you.
- Consider, "What's good about it? What can I learn from this?"
- Replace a stress-producing thought with a calming one.
- Consider *choices* in creating your life experience. Replace thinking that you *have* to do something with thinking that you *choose* to do something.
- Recognize and evaluate the "Shoulds" in your life. How much is based on other people's, and on outgrown life-styles and priorities?
- Set small, attainable goals. (Learn to play two measures a day!)
- Imagine the situation on a screen and *laugh* at the HUMOR!
- Care for your diet and total physical health. Exercise for more energy!

(Perhaps your most precious assets are your loving relationships)

- Spend time with people who give you energy and inspire you.
- Take time to develop relationships with a supportive friend and a mentor.
- Imagine conversations with people you respect for another view and support.
- Make lists of "Things I Like To Do" and "What I Admire About Myself" and do/be something from each of these lists every day. Evolve your lists.
- Schedule time for your creative self-expression through art, music, dance or any medium that gives you expression of your ideas, feelings, meanings – an audible or visual metaphor of what you think, feel, and are.
- End days appreciating the good things that you did for yourself and others and the people who care about you.

SMILE!

RECOGNIZING GIFTEDNESS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

Martin T. Rogers, Ph.D. and Linda Silverman, Ph.D.

The question of whether we can recognize gifted children at an early age is embedded in a larger issue: how much of a child's giftedness is attributable to nature and how much to nurture. When the nature/nurture question was first raised, its author, Sir Francis Galton (1869), declared that nature was responsible for all of one's abilities. In American science and education, a backlash occurred for most of the 20th century in which nurture became the primary determinant of intelligence. Today, the pendulum has swung back to more of a middle ground and now we recognize that nature and nurture are co-parents of intelligence. Children show the signs of giftedness or advanced development early in life, but whether those gifts flower into high achievements in adult life is dependent upon the nurturance they receive from their environment. Despite Madison Avenue, you just can't create a gifted child from scratch like a Yuppie pasta.

This article is based upon a comparative study of the developmental characteristics of gifted and average children (Rogers, 1986). The information was gleaned from 77 parent questionnaires; many of the parents had detailed records of their children's development (such as baby books or doctor's records). Contrary to the belief that all parents think their children are gifted, this study indicated that parents of average children do see their children's development differently from parents of gifted children. In addition, the parents of the gifted tended to **underestimate** their children's abilities rather than overestimate them. The two groups had similar socioeconomic backgrounds, and there were very few differences in physical development found between them. However, there were major differences in intellectual, imaginational and social development, as well as in talents and certain personality traits.

As you read the following descriptions, remember that each gifted child is different. Certain characteristics will apply to your child and some will not. If you see that several of these characteristics fit your child, you may wish to seek further assessment of your child's capabilities so that you can nurture those abilities.

EARLY SIGNS OF GIFTEDNESS

Parents were asked to describe their children's development during the first 36 months. (*See Table 1 below.*) One of the earliest signs of giftedness noted was **alertness.** One parent said that when her child was seven months old "he was watching Sesame Street so intently that when he finally fell asleep he was still watching and just fell over backwards." Another parent wrote, "He literally consumed his world with eagerness, wanting to learn, see, feel and touch everything, all at once."

Another early sign was **long attention span**. One parent commented, "He would play games longer than playmates and get upset when they stopped playing and would leave." A second reported, "She would work on a puzzle or a book for over a half-hour when she was only two."

Over 90 percent of the parents of the gifted saw their children as having an **excellent memory**. One gifted girl knew most of "Little Orphan Annie" at age two, and another memorized the order of the books of the Bible by age four. Well over half of the parents in

(*Continued on page 16*)

TABLE 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED AND AVERAGE CHILDREN AS DESCRIBED BY THEIR PARENTS

	Gifted	Average
Very Alert	67%	42%
Long Attention Span	31%	3%
Excellent Memory	67%	27%
Rapid Learner	58%	13%
Advanced Vocabulary	87%	34%
Very Observant	64%	34%
Very Curious	58%	40%
More than One Imaginary Companion*	50%	9%
Vivid Imagination	46%	22%
High Degree of Creativity	66%	8%

*for those reporting imaginary playmates

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Joyce VanTassel-Baska

Questioning Techniques

As I indicated in my column in the first issue, there are many effective ways one might work with gifted learners in the classroom. Of those approaches, none may be more powerful than the utilization of **effective questioning techniques.** Many educators of the gifted view effective questioning as employing a large number of higher level questions. Other educators have found Socratic questioning useful – a technique that forces the student to think more deeply about the heart of an issue and explore it from many sides. This strategy calls for asking probing questions that are directed to central points.

The Junior Great Books Foundation, a purveyor of key literature materials used in gifted programs, focuses on interpretive questions and discourages teachers from using either factual or evaluative questions. Rather, Junior Great Books encourages the use of question clusters that serve to direct the discussion along predetermined lines. Teachers are asked to read a story carefully and then focus on the major aspect of interpretation, that area of the story that is intriguing to a reader because it has not been thoroughly explicated.

The following questions are derived from Shirley Jackson's classic short story, "The Lottery." A question cluster for a 45 minute discussion with sixth grade gifted students might be:

What do we know about Mrs. Henderson from the story? About her husband? Others in her family?

Why, according to the author, does the town carry out a lottery?

What signs of foreboding are there in the story before the final act occurs?

What clues does the author provide us that the ending of the story will be tragic?

Why do the townspeople carry out the stoning? What does this act reveal about their character?

A lottery usually represents equality of opportunity to perform some tasks, as in state lotteries people have equal opportunity to win prizes. How does Jackson treat this idea of equality of opportunity in the story?

Additionally, many inquiry-based questioning models have become popular. In the following example, parts of the Structure-of-Intellect model are used as the organizer for developing the question set in social studies:

Memory/cognition:
Who started the Civil War?
Convergent:
Why was the conflict begun?
Divergent:
What if the South had won the war? What might have occurred differently from 1865-1900 in this country?
Evaluative:
In your opinion, who was the most impressive Civil War general? Why?

These two examples of questioning techniques are only two approaches of many that are effective with gifted learners. Some reminders, however, for practitioners in making decisions about questions to be asked:

CRITERIA FOR QUESTIONING

What is the purpose of each question and of the string of questions? Do they individually and collectively contribute to greater student understanding of the work under study?

Are the questions interesting to you? Would you like to discuss them?

Do the questions encourage students to think more deeply about a story or event?

Do the questions encourage discussion and dialogue?

Do the questions raise issues, themes, and problems central to the story or event?

Will the questions carry a discussion for 45 minutes, without the teacher having to intervene unduly?

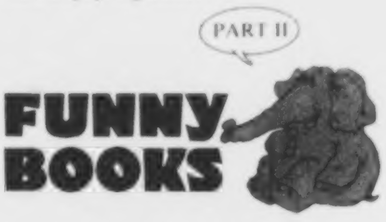
Also, it is important to note that both of the approaches cited here need to be preceded by careful reading of assigned text material. Both approaches are predicated on a student's basic knowledge and comprehension of that material in order to discuss it intelligently. Questioning strategies can only be effective if students are prepared to engage in the inquiry process. ■

Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Ed.D., is the Jody and Layton Smith Professor of Education at William and Mary College, in Williamsburg, Virginia. She is editor of *Comprehensive Curriculum for Gifted Learners.*

Stephanie S. Tolan

THE READING ROOM

Welcome back to the reading room, where the young and not so young will be introduced to some books of special interest to the gifted. We were planning to move from funny books to more serious ones in this issue, but the room got so crowded last time with the whole Bagthorpe clan and their ever-growing saga, that Anastasia Krupnik got left out in the hall. She's been beating on the door ever since, so we've decided to let her in. The Anastasia books, written by Lois Lowry, should be high on any family or class list of books to read aloud and enjoy together.



Anastasia Krupnik is an unforgettable character, brilliant, creative, and a joy to know. Introduced at the age of ten in *Anastasia Krupnik,* this precocious and delightful girl begins coping with school, family (her parents have made the appalling choice to have a baby – at their age!) and boys in her inimitable way. This first book was soon followed by *Anastasia Again!, Anastasia At Your Service, Anastasia Ask Your Analyst* – in which, because her parents refuse to allow her to "seek professional help," she purchases a bust of Sigmund Freud and begins her own private course of psychoanalysis – *Anastasia Has the Answers* and *Anastasia's Chosen Career,* by which volume Anastasia has reached the advanced age of thirteen.

These books, as funny as they are, deal with a number of sensitive issues (aging, peer relationships, self-image) in a warm and engaging way. For those who are suspicious of humor, Lowry's books are not *only* funny. Perhaps best of all, Anastasia is a thoroughly likeable character who ideas are always original, whose mistakes are understandable, whose problems are universal, and whose heart is as special as her brain.

A word about finding the books recommended in this reading room. The books we've mentioned so far are presently pretty easy to find, but this will not always be so. The easiest bookstores to find are the chain stores in the malls, where children's literature may be unavailable because the shelves are crowded with formula fiction, teen romances and the like. Worse, many books, including some of the best, now go out of print in hard cover within a few years of their original publication. Some, but not all, get a second chance in paperback reprint editions. Lately, even these are going out of print at an alarming rate.

When you look for a particular book, you may need to be aggressive. If the book is in print and the store doesn't have it, ask them to order it. No matter what they tell you, they *can*. If they won't, look for a children's bookstore in your area. If there is none, look for a non-chain bookstore, usually run by someone who knows and loves books and wants to help.

If the book is out of print (check *Books in Print* and *Paperbacks in Print* to be sure), try your public or school library. And if you still can't find it, ask about interlibrary loan. Good books are worth a little effort! ■

Stephanie Tolan, from Waterford, New York, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child.*

HOLIDAY GIFT IDEA!

Give a Holiday Gift Subscription of UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED

***Understanding Our Gifted* is the perfect gift at only $30 a year for your child's teacher, for your pediatrician, for the parents of a gifted child, or for grandparents to give their children.**

Avoid the crowds!

Prepare early for this holiday season!

Please send *Understanding Our Gifted* at a one year subscription rate of $30 as my gift to:

NAME ______________________________

COURTESY OF ______________________________

ADDRESS ______________________________

CITY *STATE* *ZIP*

[ ] *Check Enclosed (U.S. Funds)* [ ] *VISA* [ ] *Mastercard*

*Card #:*____________________ *Expiration Date:*__________

*Signature*______________________________

Make checks payable to: Snowpeak Publishing, Inc.
Send to: P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122
or call (303) 798-0986.

Please send *Understanding Our Gifted* at a one year subscription rate of $30 as my gift to:

NAME ______________________________

COURTESY OF ______________________________

ADDRESS ______________________________

CITY *STATE* *ZIP*

[ ] *Check Enclosed (U.S. Funds)* [ ] *VISA* [ ] *Mastercard*

*Card #:*____________________ *Expiration Date:*__________

*Signature*______________________________

Make checks payable to: Snowpeak Publishing, Inc.
Send to: P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122
or call (303) 798-0986.

EARLY READING Continued from page 1

ability. Many parents of intellectually gifted children find that their child begins reading at four or five years of age, and the incidence of early reading is highest among children with extraordinarily high IQs. However, the link between intelligence and reading precocity is not very strong. Many intellectually gifted children do not begin reading before first grade, and some extremely precocious readers are not highly intelligent (Jackson, 1988a). In fact, there are some mentally retarded, autistic children who have an ability called hyperlexia. Despite the general weakness of their language skills, hyperlexic children begin reading, often compulsively, during their preschool years. They may not understand what they are reading, but they have discovered and can use the complex "phonics" rules by which printed letters are translated into the sounds of English.

If precocious reading ability is not a reliable sign of general intellectual giftedness, should early readers be considered gifted? I would say "yes," because unusually advanced reading skill means that a child does not need much of the standard reading instruction given in kindergarten and the primary grades and might profit from differentiated instruction adapted to his or her particular skill pattern. I'll return to this point later.

WHEN DOES READING BEGIN?

Children do not begin to read all at once. The ability to comprehend written language develops in a gradual series of stages that seem to come in about the same sequence regardless of the pace with which a child is progressing through them. Long before a child can read even simple books, he or she begins to learn that letters and words have symbolic meaning, that English print is read from left to right, and that features of text such as letter orientation ("b" vs. "d") and the spaces between words are meaningful. When parents read to their children and for their own pleasure, children also learn that reading is a pleasurable and important activity. All of this learning can take place at home during the preschool years without parents being consciously aware that they are "teaching" their child to read (Jackson, 1988a).

> ***One father took his preschool-aged son on many excursions to local parking lots, where the child enjoyed identifying the model names of different cars and trucks.***

Because the transition into reading is so gradual, saying when a child has begun to read is somewhat arbitrary. My own preference is to say a child is reading when he or she begins to be able to identify new words, by sounding them out using phonics rules or by identifying parts of words that match parts of words already known. At this point, the child is demonstrating an ability to deal with written language as an orderly system. This is a major gain over just being able to recognize a few words that have become familiar through repeated exposure. The child at this stage can break down words into smaller units – perhaps syllables or syllable parts rather than individual letters – and synthesize new combinations of units.

For many children, the transition into "real" reading occurs during the first grade year, when it can be detected by observing that children's oral reading errors begin to show a systematic relation to the legitimate pronunciation of the word they are attempting to identify. Precocious readers may reach this point as early as age two. The milestone to notice is when a child's response to an unfamiliar word is no longer a wild guess, or just any word whose meaning fits the context, but something that at least partly matches the print. For example, I remember a three year old encountering "buttercup" and reading it by saying "butterfly...no...butter...cup...buttercup." That child clearly had systematic skills for identifying words.

DO CHILDREN WHO START READING EARLY CONTINUE TO DEVELOP RAPIDLY?

Once a child gets to the stage of identifying new words systematically and successfully, further progress in mastery of decoding print usually is rapid. However, some children who have progressed rapidly through the earliest prereading stages get stuck at or before this transition point. When I worked at a preschool for gifted children, part of my job was to prepare annual reports for parents describing the children's academic progress. It was a pleasure to tell the parents of three year olds that their children knew all the letter names. It was less pleasant to tell some of the same parents, one year later, that their children still knew all the letter names but were not yet reading many words.

Children who make rapid progress through the earliest stages of learning to read may slow down because the challenges posed at each stage of the learning process are different, and a child who is especially skilled in mastering one kind of challenge may not be equally skilled at, or equally interested in, those that come later. For example, the boy who read "buttercup" at age three continued to be a good reader later on, but his initially very rapid progress slowed down at about age six. His early interest in reading seemed to have been motivated primarily by fascination with figuring out the system of printed language. Once that challenge was mastered, he did not develop sophisticated literary interests. Instead, he turned his attention to the new challenges of learning arithmetic and computer skills (Jackson, 1988b).

Once one has mastered the print code, being an exceptionally good reader requires extensive knowledge of language and of the world, the kinds of knowledge that make up what it called "verbal intelligence." Precocious readers who are high in verbal intelligence are likely to continue to perform well on school measures of reading ability; those whose verbal intelligence is modest may get a head start in reading but are not likely to sustain an advantage over their classmates once everyone has mastered the code.

While precocity in beginning reading has not guaranteed continued exceptional achievement for the middle class children I have studied, the advantages of an early start may be greater for children from lower socioeconomic classes and ethnic minority groups who are at high risk for school failure. Being an early reader gives a child positive ways to attract teachers' attention and opens up a world of intellectual and social experiences that might not otherwise be available to a child whose parents have little education and few economic resources.

WHAT KINDS OF EXPERIENCES HELP YOUNG CHILDREN LEARN TO READ?

We live in a print-filled world, and most young children spontaneously take advantage of the learning opportunities it provides. For example, one of the first words most children recognize is "STOP" as it appears on a traffic sign. At first, a beginning reader may be responding not just to the word but to the whole complex of visual and situational cues. Later, the supporting context becomes less necessary. Similarly, a child may follow along as a parent reads and re-reads a favorite story, slowly building up mental connections between the words that are spoken and the words that are printed on each page.

Television programs such as "Sesame Street," instructional toys, and home computer programs also can provide useful learning opportunities if a child enjoys them, and many parents of precocious readers report that their child watches "Sesame Street" regularly. However, parents who choose not to use high-tech instructional aids are not depriving their child of essential experiences. One doesn't need to rely on any particular system in order to help a young child learn to read. The activities most likely to foster a child's interest in reading are those that both parent and child enjoy. For example, one father took his preschool-aged son on many excursions to local parking lots, where the child enjoyed identifying the model names of different cars and trucks. Starting reading instruction with words like "Dodge Aries K" or "Honda" might not work for every child, but this young automotive enthusiast wanted to read car names because they were important to him. Other parents have reported that their child's first reading teacher was an older sibling who played "school" with an eagerly attentive preschooler.

> *The worst mistake parents of gifted children are likely to make in trying to encourage the development of their child's reading skills is to expect too much too soon, turning reading into a chore.*

In a recent study (Jackson, Donaldson, & Cleland, 1988), parents of six year olds who had begun reading at unusually early ages were asked about things they had done that might have helped their children learn. *Almost all of the parents had read to their children, pointing out letters and words as they went along, discussing the pictures and the meaning of words, and checking the child's comprehension of the story. Most of these parents also identified letter and number names for their child, taught letter sounds, and helped the child with spelling.* Some or all of these activities may have contributed to the children's early achievement in reading, but parents of children who do not read early often do the same things.

Children who read early do not necessarily have "pushy" parents, and children who do not read early do not necessarily have neglectful ones. For reasons we do not yet understand, some children seem to be ready (or willing) to learn to read earlier than others are, even if all have had similar facilitating experiences.

The worst mistake parents of gifted children are likely to make in trying to encourage the development of their child's reading skills is to expect too much too soon, turning reading into a chore. Learning to read can be a comfortable, natural part of parents' interactions with their preschool children, but parents need to be sensitive to the child's developmental pace and changing interests. Reading should be something the child does for his or her own gratification, not so parents can earn points in the neighborhood superbaby contest.

WHAT KINDS OF SKILLS DO PRECOCIOUS READERS HAVE OR LACK?

The old injunction against parents teaching their preschool-age children to read was based in part on the fear that amateur teaching might leave a child with a nonstandard set of skills that would interfere with the child's future progress. **There is no evidence whatsoever that this fear was justified.** Research I have been doing in the past few years indicates that, on the average, the specific mental processes that precocious readers use to identify words are quite similar to the processes used by children who have learned to read in school. I'm continuing to search for special characteristics of precocious readers, but the group differences I have found so far appear in some kinds of reading but not in others or are too small to have practical importance. However, it is important to remember that the primary school reading or language arts curriculum includes instruction in many skills besides the basics of reading itself – printing, spelling, using punctuation, using references such as the dictionary, and so on. *Children who have learned to read on their own may have some important gaps in their mastery of this broad set of skills.*

Although precocious readers, as a group, seem to read much as average readers do, there are striking individual differences in reading style. There does not seem to be any one pattern of reading skills that characterizes precocious readers, just as there is no one pattern that characterizes children who are having difficulty learning to read (Jackson *et al.*, 1988). Children who are equally able in terms of their general reading skills and comprehension ability vary along a continuum of reading styles. Some precocious readers seem to read slowly and precisely, making few errors and showing excellent mastery of phonics rules. Others zip quickly through a passage, omitting or misreading words. The quick and sloppy readers also seem to be poorer users of phonics rules. In the long run, these style differences don't seem to matter much, although children who are fast and sloppy readers at about age 6 are still faster readers in fifth or sixth grade.

HOW CAN SCHOOLS HELP PRECOCIOUS READERS CONTINUE TO DEVELOP?

The first challenge faced by public school personnel who want to provide the best possible instruction for children who are already reading by the time they start kindergarten or first grade is simply finding the children. During the first months of the kindergarten year, classroom teachers may be so overwhelmed with identifying and providing help for children with intellectual, social, emotional, or physical problems that a child who has all of the requisite skills (and many more) may be overlooked. Children may be reluctant to draw attention to themselves by announcing that the simple prereading exercises they are doing are too easy. Most kindergarten and first grade activities, including group achievement tests, don't offer any way for advanced readers to show what they can do, and children may dutifully complete ridiculously easy exercises because that is the behavior that seems to be expected.

Some districts systematically ask parents about any unusual abilities their children may have. *Some individual kindergarten teachers have solved the problem of early identification by creative strategies such as printing an exciting message on the blackboard and asking if anyone in the class knows what it says.* Teachers who have not identified the unusually advanced readers in their classes may appreciate tactful notes or phone call from parents.

School districts differ enormously in how much progress in reading they expect of children in kindergarten and first grade and in the numbers of precocious readers likely to turn up in any one class. Districts with the highest concentrations of advanced readers are not necessarily the ones with the most demanding curricula, and neither factor may have much to do with the quality of instruction provided for precocious readers. The reports that many parents of precocious readers have given me suggest that what matters in the instruction of precocious readers is no different from what matters in gifted education in general. The trick is to find a teacher who enjoys and is skilled at working with advanced students and a school that will provide some flexible accommodation to a child's needs. Flexibility may involve having a child join a reading group in a higher grade, scheduling individual sessions with the school's reading specialist, or gathering together a group of unusually advanced readers from several classes. Whatever the instructional strategy used, the diversity of skill patterns shown by precocious readers means that each child should be treated as an individual. Comprehensive assessment of a precocious reader's reading and reading-related skills may suggest both strengths that can be the basis of new learning and gaps that need to be filled in. ■

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This material is based in part upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. BNS 8509963. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

REFERENCES

Elkind, D. (1981). *The hurried child*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Jackson, N.E. (1988a). Precocious reading ability: What does it mean? *Gifted Child Quarterly, 32*, 200-204.

Jackson, N.E. (1988b). Case study of Bruce: A child with advanced intellectual abilities. In J.M. Sattler, *Assessment of children* (3rd edition, pp. 676-678). San Diego: Jerome Sattler, Publisher.

Jackson, N.E., Donaldson, G., & Cleland, L. (1988). The structure of precocious reading ability. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 80*, 234-243.

Nancy Ewald Jackson, Ph.D. is Research Associate Professor, Department of Parent and Child Nursing, University of Washington.

Linda Kreger Silverman

PERSONALITY PLUS

On Introversion

The American dream is to be extraverted. We want our children to be "people who need people." We want them to have lots of friends, to like parties, to prefer to play outside with their buddies rather than retire with a good book, to make friends easily, to greet new experiences enthusiastically, to be good risk-takers, to be open about their feelings, to be trusting. We regard anyone who doesn't fit this pattern with some concern. We call them "withdrawn," "aloof," "shy," "secretive," and "loners." These pejorative terms show the extent to which we misunderstand introverts.

The majority of Americans are extraverted (about 75%), but the majority of gifted children appear to be introverted (about 60%), and the percentage of introverts seems to increase with IQ (Silverman, 1986). In addition to the problems encountered with being gifted, these children are frequently misjudged because they are introverted. Introversion is a perfectly normal personality type identified by Carl Jung. It is actually **healthy** to be an introvert. The only unhealthy part of it is denying your true self and trying to disguise yourself as an extravert.

Introverts are wired differently from extraverts and they have different needs. Extraverts get their energy from interaction with people and the external world. Introverts get their energy from within themselves; too much interaction drains their energy and they need to retreat from the world to recharge their batteries. People can be extreme extraverts, extreme introverts, or a combination of both. Since extraversion is the dominant mode in our society, there are no "closet extraverts," but there are many "closet introverts," people who are so ashamed of their introversion that they try to be extraverts.

Here are some tips on the care and feeding of the introverts in your family or classroom:

HOW TO CARE FOR INTROVERTS

- **Respect their need for privacy.**
- **Never embarrass them in public.**
- **Let them observe first in new situations.**
- **Give them time to think. Don't demand instant answers.**
- **Don't interrupt them.**
- **Give them advanced notice of expected changes in their lives.**
- **Give them 15 minute warnings to finish whatever they are doing before calling them to dinner or moving on to the next activity.**
- **Reprimand them privately.**
- **Teach them new skills privately rather than in public.**
- **Enable them to find one best friend who has similar interests and abilities; encourage this relationship even if the friend moves.**
- **Do not push them to make lots of friends.**
- **Respect their introversion. Don't try to remake them into extraverts.**

Introverts need to learn about the positive benefits of their personality type. They need to be taught that reflection is a good quality, that the most creative individuals sought solitude, and that leaders in academic, aesthetic and technical fields are often introverts. Parents need to know that more National Merit Scholars are introverted than extraverted, and that introverts have higher grade point averages in Ivy League colleges than extraverts (Silverman, 1986). Contrary to public opinion, success in life is not dependent upon extraversion. Introverts also have an advantage at midlife in that long, hard journey to the soul which heralds the second half of the life cycle. The time has come to respect the introverts in our families and classrooms, and the hidden introvert in ourselves.

I recommend the book *Please Understand Me* for parents, teachers and students to gain a better grasp of the different personality types in our lives. Great for family reading! ■

REFERENCE

Keirsey, D., & Bates, M. (1978). *Please understand me: Character & temperament types*. Del Mar, CA: Prometheus Nemesis Books.

Silverman, L.K. (1986). Parenting young gifted children. In J.R. Whitmore (Ed.), *Intellectual giftedness in young children*. New York: The Haworth Press.

Linda Silverman, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist and Director of the Gifted Child Development Center in Denver, Colorado.

RULES, ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES Continued from page 1

a logical reason for following a rule. What are the limits, when can you question, which rules are hard and fast, why do the rules change from time to time and place to place? For some gifted children these questions are troubling. We have learned, at times painfully, that responding to their need to understand rules must begin very early.

Parents and teachers of the gifted rarely fail to mention curiosity as a characteristic of these learners. Jerome Bruner (1978) suggests that **curiosity can be seen as the beginning of a willingness to explore alternatives.** Their need for alternatives is often demonstrated in the questioning of rules.

MODELING

One of the most effective ways adults earn the respect of gifted children is by modeling the process of problem-solving and rule-following. Bruner (1978) suggests the need to pause and review in order to recognize the connections within what has been learned. This ability to move back through a process in order to check yourself or take note of what is needed can be seen in those who are effective problem solvers. Our young gifted children need to see these processes modeled by adults. Adults working with them are laying important groundwork when they model their own "thinking through" of the reasons behind rules by "talking aloud" about daily encounters with rules and problems.

INQUIRING

The process of examining what our alternatives are, and how we engage in solving problems referred to earlier, is a kind of "self-looping," and it is another responsibility we have as we interact with gifted children.

Maxine Greene (1978) suggets that through helping children to pose searching and significant questions we enable them to become aware, to think, and to "affirm the joys of living mindfully" (p.250). Inquiry and question posing are surely the key elements in personal growth as well as information-processing.

Our responsibility to model the processes of inquiry, of asking the questions which move us toward workable solutions, of seeking more experience and information, cannot be minimized. It is at times an awesome responsibility we have. We want children to know when they can go beyond what appears to be true, how to fit new knowledge into a system of categories and frames of reference, and feel rewarded for the exercise of thinking. As they turn back and reflect, discover what it is they have been doing, and realize it has productive power, they gain the tools for life-long learning.

> ***What are the limits, when can you question, which rules are hard and fast, why do the rules change from time to time and place to place? For some gifted children these questions are troubling.***

The exploration of alternatives and the search for solutions which we note in many gifted students are not always as welcome in the family situation as in the school setting. At home certain rules are established, roles are identified, and responsibilities delineated. The student as family member may not be encouraged to question and argue at home even though questioning and engaging in inquiry are valued in the gifted program at school. As parents we need to remind ourselves that the thinker/problem solver we wish to nurture is acting out that role in varying degrees at home, at school and in social situations. The child is at times encouraged in this and at other times discouraged. The resulting confusion may cause negative behavior.

Alternatively, some parents are unhappy if the school program fails to stimulate intellectual curiosity in their children. They may sense a discrepancy between the questioning and alternative seeking behavior they encourage at home and the conforming behavior which the school seems to encourage.

Alas, the unfortunate gifted youngster who challenges rules, questions statements, probes, seeks alternatives and otherwise exercises intellectual curiosity may find these behaviors unwelcome at home, at school, or in both places. It seems as if roles must alter, rules change and expectations differ, if we are to meet the needs of these children effectively.

SUPPORTING

Another special responsibility of parents and teachers of the gifted is the ability to be a support system or "cheerleader." This involves knowing the special strengths of the child, the areas needing more development, and the sensitive spots to be handled with care.

Cheerleading is always easier when we know who needs the cheers the most and when they are needed most. Cheers should be specific in order to help the child know him- or herself better. The recent work of Howard Gardner (1983) in identifying basic kinds of intelligence suggests that there are seven areas in which special strengths may be shown. The child may begin very early to demonstrate linguistic, musical, logical/mathematical, spatial, kinesthetic, intra-personal, or inter-personal intelligences.

There are many whose profiles include combinations of these strengths, others who excel in one of these areas.

This view of "intelligences" places a focus on those areas of talent or aptitude adults see in children. Certainly, the seven areas Gardner discusses offer a perspective useful to us as we act as cheerleaders. This role may be a key in helping our children become more self-knowing and thus, self-directed as they mature.

Praise for examples of clear thinking, careful planning, the asking of relevant questions, and the use of higher level thought processes provides the kind of feedback which enables growth to occur. This is the context in which "cheerleading" becomes a part of the role of adults working with gifted youngsters. It is, of course, appropriate for all children. With respect to gifted children, specific praise for areas of strength and special talents enables them to develop a view of self which is more complete and more healthy than just the knowledge that they have been labelled "gifted."

EVALUATING

Bruno Bettelheim (1988) reminds us that parents must decide which of two options is the more important. Should children be urged to settle down and play according to adult rules or should they be helped to work at becoming thoughtful and self-directed people? Many parents of the gifted favor the second option but it must be remembered that time must then be spent on the planning and experimenting that define the quality of a learning experience.

Frequent evaluation by adults can stifle thinking in children. Gifted children should be involved in the process of evaluation at an early age through emphasis on thinking through, thinking about, and thinking aloud. We can model these processes and we can offer specific praise and "cheers" whenever we see or hear our children use their abilities well.

> ***Frequent evaluation by adults can stifle thinking in children. Gifted children should be involved in the process of evaluation at an early age through emphasis on thinking through, thinking about, and thinking aloud.***

As we move ever more quickly toward the next century, time to read, time to think, time to talk about what we read and think seems to be more difficult to find. If it is a problem for us as adults, it is or will be a problem for our gifted children. We can make time for meaningful discussions of ideas at home and at school to enhance the integration of children's learning.

SUMMARY

Perhaps we need to remind ourselves of our role as models of thinking, inquiring, people. We certainly need to be "cheerleaders" for our gifted children by giving them specific feedback and praise. In this way, we encourage their possible role as cheerleaders for each other as well as developing their sense of self.

Gifted children value honesty, self-respect and responsibility. They respond to rules and roles that address these traits. As parents and teachers, we are their primary role models. If we model honesty, respect and responsibility, and we treat these children with respect, they will develop into responsible individuals. We cannot ask of them what we do not ask of ourselves. ■

REFERENCES

Bettelheim, (1988). *A good enough parent.* New York: Vintage Press, Random House.

Bruner, (1978). *Toward a theory of instruction.* Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Gardner H., (1983). *Frames of mind: A theory of multiple intelligences.* New York: Basic Books.

Greene M., (1978). *Landscapes of learning.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Joan H. Ellenhorn, Ed.D., is Staff Development Consultant and Professor of Curriculum Design at City University in New York.

> *These children are like plants that need stakes to grow against,*
> *with gentle ties where necessary to support their natural growth,*
> *instead of being rigidly espaliered to a stone wall*
> *in artificial designs someone else devised.*
>
> — *Stephanie Tolan* —

Kathi Kearney

THE HIGHLY GIFTED

School Placement

The issue of school placement and educational decision-making is one of the most difficult and demanding tasks families of exceptionally gifted children face. Highly gifted children, by their very nature, may defy the usual patterns of child development with which most schools and parents are familiar. And for both teachers and parents, instead of being able to rely on tried and tested methods, the experience of developing an appropriate educational program for these children may resemble more the experience of charting unknown territory in the Amazon jungle!

Finding ways to make the school experience both productive and meaningful for highly gifted children is the shared challenge of the teacher, the parents – and the child herself. This column and the next one focus on the unique skills necessary to develop appropriate school placements for extremely gifted children.

Obtain an accurate assessment of the child's abilities

> *Karin, age seven, has been tested with four different IQ measures. Karin's elementary school administered a group IQ test and she scored 145. Her full-scale score on the individually administered WISC-R was 140; on the K-ABC, 143; and on the Stanford-Binet Form L-M, above the norms of the test, but estimated at 180+.*

If we know a child is gifted, is it important to know *how* gifted? The answer is **yes**. The kind of educational program that is appropriate for a child of 160 or 170 IQ is not the same kind of program that is appropriate for a more moderately gifted child. Obtaining an accurate assessment of highly gifted child's abilities may be difficult, because of the limitations of the tests themselves. Most modern measures of intelligence do not have a high enough ceiling to fully tap the abilities of these children. Karin's scores are more meaningful when we consider that the highest score possible on the group test was 145 and that several of her subtest scores on the WISC-R were at the ceiling. In this case, the Stanford-Binet Form L-M (the "old Binet") remains the test of choice for highly gifted children like Karin, because of its higher ceiling (it is possible to extrapolate scores above 164), and because of an unequaled research history of over 70 years with the Stanford-Binet Form L-M and its previous editions, in the study of gifted children.

Make educational decisions within the context of the child's total development.

> *Jeffrey completed pre-algebra in the sixth grade, with honors grades. He took the Scholastic Aptitude Test at age 11 and scored above 500, qualifying for a special fast-paced summer program in algebra. Yet his response to this opportunity was "But this is my last summer to play Little League baseball and I* **really** *want to play Little League!"*
>
> *Andrea, at the same age, achieved similar scores on the SAT. Her response to the school officials who suggested "enrichment" opportunities while remaining with age peers for social reasons was an adamant "I don't want to do* **extra** *work, I want to go ahead in my work!" She attended the Johns Hopkins program, completing Algebra I in 3 weeks over the summer.*

The developmental patterns of highly gifted children are marked by discrepancies between intellectual, physical, social, and emotional factors. Such discrepancies are an absolutely normal part of the development of a highly intelligent child, and should be accepted as such. The implications of this, however, mean that an educational decision that is right at one point in the child's development may not be right at another. It doesn't necessarily mean that the original decision was a wrong one – it only means that *all* educational decisions need to be continuously reviewed within the context of the child's ongoing development. Jeffrey and Andrea, at the same age and with similar abilities, had different developmental needs. Jeffrey joyfully played Little League that summer (and later became the only 7th grader in the history of his school to take Algebra I.)

HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER *(See Page 3)* By: *Suzanne M. Perry*

SUGGESTIONS TO HELP EMPHASIZE AND ENHANCE HEARING IMPAIRED GIFTED LEARNERS ABILITIES

IDENTIFY AND EXPAND UPON GIFTED HEARING IMPAIRED STUDENT STRENGTHS:

- Goal directed behavior
- Sharp powers of observation
- Retentive memory
- Inventiveness in approaching problems
- Wide variety of interests
- Skill in compensating for hearing loss

OFFER HANDS-ON, MULTISENSORY OPPORTUNITIES

- Use manipulatives at all grade levels.
- Allow students to investigate and share their knowledge about topics via projects (dioramas, mobiles, sculpture, puppetry, models etc.) instead of written tests or reports.
- Use computer assisted instruction.
- Use the chalkboard (and colored chalk!) to reinforce, illustrate or diagram rather than relying on verbal or written presentation only. Filmstrips and films, study prints, pictures and models are also helpful.

PROVIDE COMMUNICATION AND DISCUSSION SETTINGS

- Foster discussion *with* not *to* hearing impaired students about topics of their interest.
- Encourage discussion about feelings as well as content areas.
- Communicate with the child's teacher or parent regarding the child's strengths and classroom adaptations to help support needs.

(Highly Gifted cont'd from page 14).

For Andrea, acceleration was an increasingly comfortable pattern, and she entered college early.

Be flexible.

> *Laura was unhappy in her third-grade class, despite weekly participation in the gifted program and an attempt to individualize the regular classroom instruction. When her mother approached the school with her concerns, the principal replied, "But all the other gifted children in this program are doing just fine, Mrs. Smith. What is wrong with your daughter?"*

> *Kyle's mother, on the other hand, had encouraged her local school to begin a full-time self-contained class for gifted and highly gifted children. When Kyle's needs changed after the first year of the class, school officials listened carefully to his mother's concerns and adapted his program.*

Flexibility is an essential ingredient for the school, the teacher, and the parent when developing and adapting educational programs for the highly gifted. Without flexibility it is nearly impossible to respond appropriately, at school or within the family, to extremely advanced development. ■

In the next issue we will discuss three additional recommendations relating to the issue of school placement and educational decision-making:

Don't be afraid to attempt a major educational intervention if it is warranted.

Expect to make mid-course corrections.

Listen to the child, and involve him or her in making educational decisions.

Kathi Kearney is Director of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in Auburn, Maine, a resource teacher, and editor of *Highly Gifted Children*

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

If you've missed our premier issue focusing on Social and Emotional Needs, there's still time to order while supplies last.

Send $6.50 per issue (prepaid) to: Snowpeak Publishing, Inc.
P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122 or call (303) 798-0986.

[ ] VISA [ ] MASTERCARD
Card #________________
Expiration Date ____________
____
Signature

NAME________________________
ADDRESS ______________________
CITY____________STATE____ZIP______

RECOGNIZING GIFTEDNESS Continued from page 5

the gifted group perceived their children as **rapid learners**. The speed at which gifted children learned generally became apparent by the time these children were three years old. One girl could count to 20 at 18 months of age, and could say her ABCs at age two. Another mother wrote, "Before she went to kindergarten, she taught herself to paint and was writing in sentences. When she started kindergarten, she became disillusioned."

Nine out of ten parents of the gifted reported **advanced vocabulary development** in their children. Parents noticed extensive vocabulary in their gifted children by the time the children were three. One parent kept a record of 100 words that her boy spoke by the age of 18 months. While none of the parents of average students gave examples of any specific words, parents in the gifted group mentioned such examples as: "delicious" and "incredible" at age 2; "Rudolf was **ostracized** by the other reindeer" at age 2.5; "incidentally" at age 3. One 3 year old prefaced sentences with, "Well, apparently...."

Two-thirds of the parents of gifted children found their children to be **very observant**. Many parents mentioned that their children "really noticed details." One child knew how to get to the park and the library by the age of three. Sixty percent of the parents of the gifted said that their children were **curious**. Most of the parents of the gifted observed their children's curiosity by the age of 2 1/2, about two years earlier than parents of average children.

Almost all of the gifted children were perceived by their parents as asking "probing" rather than simple questions. At the age of 18 months, one child wondered, "What is air? How high up does it go? Why doesn't it all float away?" A three-year-old boy wanted to know how airplanes work and how people breathe. Another three year old asked, "Will I still be me when I grow up?" Global and abstract issues occupied the minds of several of these youngsters. One child asked detailed, probing questions about politics, nuclear war, world peace starvation, pollution, energy, and so forth.

IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY

Imaginary playmates showed up in both groups, but only one child in the average group had more than one of these playmates, while gifted children often had several of them. One child's imaginary friends included, "Jesus as a young boy. He appeared most often when 'B' was afraid, lonely or frustrated. They carried on lengthy conversations." Another child had a "family that lived in the pan cupboard: David, the father; Kookoo, the mother, and Baby Dew They later had another baby, Rose. David died. She also had a teen-ager sister, Hallelujah." One parent wrote, "Being an only child, 'C' had "Imaginary Friend" (that was his name) to play board games, etc. Not surprisingly, Friend always lost."

Over two-thirds of the parents of the gifted described their children as **creative** and imaginative, and about half had observed signs of **vivid imagination** in their children before the age of three. One parent recollected:

> **At about age three, 'D' wanted a certain toy and his Dad told him to get a job and earn the money. He immediately went to his room, colored about 10 pictures and took them around the block, selling them door-to-door. Most people gave him 10 to 15 cents for them because of the story he told them. We only knew our immediate neighbors, so we wondered what our other neighbors thought of us!**

ACADEMIC SKILLS

Many gifted children show an **intense interest in books** at an early age. *(See Table 3 on page 17.)* One parent reported, "at 13 months, she would drag one of us to read with her and sit fascinated until the whole book was read." By the time these children were in third or fourth grade, three-fourths of them continued to be interested in reading, compared to one-fourth of the average group. Almost half of the

TABLE 2

SKILLS DEMONSTRATED BY GIFTED AND AVERAGE CHILDREN

	Gifted	Average
Recognized Letters by Age 2	56%	33%
Recognized First Word by Age 2	31%	15%
Sight Read Easy Reader by Age 4	50%	22%
Sounded Out New Words by Age 4	42%	13%
Solved a 20-Piece Puzzle by Age 3	81%	49%
Showed an Interest in Time by Age 2	24%	5%
Told Time in Hours by Age 5	61%	28%
Counted to Ten by Age 3	52%	24%
High Degree of Math Understanding	40%	8%

parents of the gifted students describe their children's interest in reading as "intense." A mother of a third grader wrote, "She always loved reading. She likes Poe, Shakespearian quotes, poetry, Shel Silverstein, Charlotte's Web, etc." A fourth-grade boy sought out "Encyclopedia Brown mysteries, anything on Einstein or a composer, especially Beethoven." Several of the parents of the gifted mentioned that their children enjoy informational books compared with only one such reference in the average group.

TABLE 3

INTERESTS SHOWN BY GIFTED AND AVERAGE CHILDREN

	Gifted	Average
Intense Interest in Books	46%	10%
Interest in Math Games	48%	16%
Interest in Puzzles	91%	64%
Interest in Calculators	36%	13%
Interest in Computers (Not Videogames)	90%	47%
Many Talents	16%	3%
Great Number of Interests	74%	50%
Willing to Invest Time in Interests	49%	19%

Significant differences were found in the ages at which gifted children recognized letters, recognized words, sight read, and sounded out new words as compared with average children. These differences are shown in Table 2. *(See page 16.)*

Almost all of the gifted group liked puzzles. *(See Table 3 above.)* Four out of five gifted children could **put together a 20-piece puzzle by the age of three**. One child could put together a 100-piece puzzle between the ages of four and five, and a very precocious youngster could solve a 500-piece puzzle at the age of three "but became quite frustrated," according to the parents. One parent gave us a fascinating account:

> **He could tell by the shapes how to put the puzzle together and memorized the shapes of the puzzle pieces very fast; then he would turn the pieces and work the puzzle upside-down.**

About one-fourth of the gifted group **showed an interest in time by the age of two**. One parent wrote, "he had a play watch when he was two and we would work on how to read it and what it all meant; he would always want to know how long things would take to do." Another parent reported that his child became "obsessed" about knowing what time it was, what day of the week it was, and the date. Almost two-thirds of the gifted group **told time in hours by the age of five**. Parents of average children limited their descriptions to the age at which their children told time, while parents of gifted children often described the way their child related to time as a concept. Though competent at telling time, gifted children often seemed to lose track of it when involved in other activities.

By age three, more than half of the gifted group could **count to ten**. Consistent differences were also found between the groups in interest in math games, calculators and computers. *(See Table 3 above.)* Five times as many gifted children as average children were reported as having a high degree of understanding of mathematical concepts. One child was able to do double digit addition in his head in first grade and was pressing his parents to teach him division in kindergarten.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

The majority of the parents of the gifted group described their children as having a great **sense of humor**. *(See Table 4 on page 20.)* Of the nine parents who mentioned puns, only one was in the average group. One parent indicated that at five her daughter became a punster, joking about "symbols" and "cymbals." Another parent said that her son appreciated adult jokes and understood them from the time he was around four years old. He liked adults better than children from the time he was two or three.

Over half of the gifted sample showed **intense reactions of frustration** and seemed **perfectionistic** to their parents. None of the gifted group were seen as reacting "mildly" to criticism. Anger was the most common reaction to criticism reported. One of the areas of perfectionism often mentioned by parents had to do with academic concerns. Both groups said that their children tended to be more perfectionistic in areas of interest (which did not include cleaning their rooms). *Gifted or not, they still don't want to clean their rooms.*

None of the average students chose friends much older than themselves, whereas one-third of the gifted students chose older playmates and 15% chose much older companions. Parents of the gifted group often remarked that their children tended to spend time with adults, where this was not mentioned by parents of the average group. More than one-third of the gifted children were comfortable playing by themselves. Parents of gifted children often mentioned that their children enjoyed spending time alone reading.

(Continued on page 20)

Martha Morelock

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS:
The Young Gifted Child

Testing

Today's testing instruments can sometimes provide useful diagnostic information for parents whose children are having difficulty adjusting to the normal school curriculum. However, the results of such testing can sometimes also be puzzling – or even incomprehensible.

A parent whose precocious first grader was having problems remaining attentive in his public school classroom decided to request that he be tested by the school psychologist to determine his ability and achievement levels. The mother was surprised to discover that her son's math and reading achievement tests showed him as functioning at fifth grade level. She was even more surprised, however, to find that his McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities IQ score indicated that he was accomplishing all of that with an IQ of 115. Such a score placed his ability within the "bright normal" range.

An "overachiever"? No! If the school psychologist had done some research prior to the testing, he would have discovered that the McCarthy is not the test of choice for assessing gifted children. Gifted children generally show lower IQs with the McCarthy because it does not contain sufficiently high enough level material to reflect their superior abilities in their areas of strength. Also, in order to earn a high score on the McCarthy, a child must perform consistently well on every part of the test. The McCarthy, like the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - Revised (WISC-R) and the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI), contains a "Performance" subtest geared to estimate a child's perceptual organization and fine motor skills. Research (Bracken, 1983; McCallum, Karnes, & Bracken, 1982; Speer, Hawthorne & Buccelato, 1986) has shown that gifted children score lower on this area than on the Verbal Comprehension Scales which tend to tap their areas of strength. Thus, the overall IQ score is depressed because of the influence of the Performance part of the test.

The test of choice for gifted children has been the Stanford-Binet **Form L-M**. It can be used for children as young as two years of age and, being a heavily verbally weighted test, is a reliable identification measure for selecting those children who manifest strong verbal and conceptual abilities. To respond to the growing awareness of various types of cognitive processing and concomitant needs for instruments to pinpoint areas of learning disability, however, the decision was made to revise the Stanford-Binet into a more widely applicable instrument. The developers of the new test, the Stanford-Binet Fourth Edition, specifically set about to remedy what they saw as the "limitation" of the L-M version – it was too heavily weighted with verbal material.

The Fourth Edition of the Stanford-Binet emerged in 1986 and has caused quite a reaction in the world of gifted assessment. Children who would have scored exceptionally high on the old form do not on the new one, and preschools for the gifted around the country which have attempted to use the new test are having to take a second look at their screening procedures (Kitano & DeLeon, 1988). Some have recommended that only a child's Verbal Comprehension Factor score be considered, since that appears to be the area most important for scholastic achievement. Gifted youngsters do not tend to score as high on the Fourth Edition's new Nonverbal Reasoning/Visualization Factor, bringing down their "Composite Score" (IQ).

The point of all this is that IQ scores from various tests are *not* interchangeable. If you are having your child tested, it will do you well to ask what test is being given and make it a point to find out how the composition of the test itself may affect your child's IQ measure. Your best bet is to find someone who is especially skilled in testing gifted children, so that he or she is aware of the particular pitfalls involved. Given the limitations of the available tests, practitioners administering such tests as well as parents whose children are submitted to them need to become selective and enlightened consumers of the resultant information. ■

REFERENCES

Bracken, B. (1983). Comparison of the performance of gifted children on the McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities and the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, *6*(4), pp. 289-293.

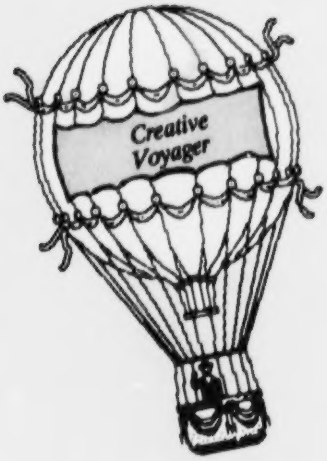
Kitano, M. & De Leon, J. (1988). Use of the Stanford-Binet Fourth Edition in identifying young gifted children. *Roeper Review*, *10*(3), pp. 156-159.

McCallum, R., Karnes, F., & Bracken, B. (1982). Comparison of the PPVT, PPVT-R and the WISC-R with gifted students. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 5, 274-281.

Speer, S.K., Hawthorne, L.W., and Buccellato, L. (1986). Intellectual patterns of young gifted children on the WPSSI. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, *10*(1), pp. 57-63.

Martha Morelock , is a Doctoral Student in Child Study at the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study, Tufts University.

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY



Creative Ventures And Encounters

Jerry Flack
Tour Guide

CALENDARS . . .

In days gone by, general stores and feed companies gave out calendars to their customers each December. Those simple, homely calendars and the practice of giving them are now pretty much things of the past. Walk into almost any bookstore today and you will find an entire section devoted to calendars...hundreds of calendars to match nearly every considerable interest, hobby, taste or fancy. As the holiday season approaches, why not have the children in your home or classroom create their own original theme-oriented calendars for holiday gift giving. Suggest to Julie and Mark that they pick a theme which can be developed into at least twelve parts. They then create twelve artwork panels for the months of the year, and engage in library research and creative thinking and writing to produce interesting, relevant dates and information to include in the days of the month sections of the calendar. Julie, who likes Egyptian history may draw twelve pictures of famous people, events, and sites for her calendar panels. Wherever possible, she can also include two or three brief pieces of information each month about Egypt's history, art, and civilization. The calendars can, of course, be creatively tongue-in-cheek. A calendar with rabbits and bunnies as its theme might feature the famous actor/director "Rabbit" Redford one month, and cowboy "Hop-A-Long" Cassidy the next.

Creatively designed and produced calendars make exceptionally nice, personal, and inexpensive gifts for youngsters to create for parents, siblings, and grandparents. Imagine, for example, the pride a grandparent feels in having on her desk or office wall an original calendar produced by her grandson.

. . . AND CATALOGS

I am a genuine, grade-A, certified pack-rat. My classrooms have always overflowed with "treasures" which other, more temperate and tidy souls have discarded. Not too many years back I kept a table in the corner of my classroom which overflowed with trade catalogs my colleagues and weary mailmen gladly tossed my way. Examining the mountains of L.L. Bean, Neiman-Marcus, Eddie Bauer, and Abercrombie & Fitch catalogs, an idea began to emerge from my fevered brain and take shape. Why not have students create their own catalogs? The next day the students were off and running– designers, copy writers, and advertising departments all rolled into one.

Each student was asked to create his own catalog. Each catalog was to have a central theme, ten to twelve well-described items, and as much original art work as possible. I shared examples of unique and highly creatively produced commercial catalogs. The Neiman-Marcus Christmas catalog is always dazzling in its display on unusual gifts (e.g., a $600 Monopoly game made of fine chocolate; his & her ostriches). Two theme catalogs I shared were the "Pork Avenue Collection" and "The Bear Necessities" catalogs. Folks who are hog-wild about piggish decorations shop from the former catalog, just as teddy bear enthusiasts can find everything from pandas to Paddington in the bear-theme catalog.

The selection and development of the theme *(Continued on page 21)*

RECOGNIZING GIFTEDNESS Continued from page 17

TABLE 4

PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL TRAITS OF GIFTED AND AVERAGE CHILDREN

	Gifted	Average
Sophisticated Sense of Humor	64%	40%
Intense Reactions to Frustration	51%	24%
Perfectionistic	56%	21%
Chooses Older Companions	31%	12%
Likes to Play Alone	37%	10%
Great Concern with Morality and Justice	36%	8%
Acts Mature for Age	77%	37%
Highly Competitive	23%	13%
Strong Leadership Ability	36%	16%

Many gifted children showed **great concern for morality and justice**. Some of their parents discussed global issues with them, whereas this wasn't mentioned by parents of average children. Although concern for fairness was mentioned by parents in both groups, it was a predominant factor reported by the parents of the gifted sample.

Other differences found between gifted and average students in this study showed gifted students to have **more talents, greater maturity, higher intensity of competitiveness in several areas, greater leadership ability, greater number and intensity of interests, and greater willingness to invest time and effort in their interests than their same-age peers**.

A FINAL WORD

If your child fits a large number of these characteristics, it is a good idea to keep **records** of early achievements to assist later identification. Four years old is not too young to have your child tested by a qualified examiner. Make sure this individual is experienced with gifted children. Because their minds are developmentally advanced, gifted children need to be given early exposure to games and activities designed for older children. It is important to find environments that address your child's unique potential. As one parent in our study stated, "When educational needs are met, other problems improve." These children need time with others like themselves so that they can find true peers with whom they can relate.

Once you discover that your child is gifted, cautions must be taken so that you neither hide nor flaunt his or her giftedness. One can lead to atrophy of abilities and the other can lead to social and emotional problems. Early recognition and nurturance of giftedness will increase your child's chances of achieving happiness and fulfillment in adult life. ■

REFERENCES

Galton, F. (1869). *Hereditary genius.* London: Macmillan.

Rogers, M. T. (1986). *A comparative study of developmental traits of gifted and average youngsters.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Denver, Denver, CO.

Martin T. Rogers Ph.D., teaches 5th grade in the CHIPS Program (Challenging High Intellect Potential Students) in Littleton, CO.

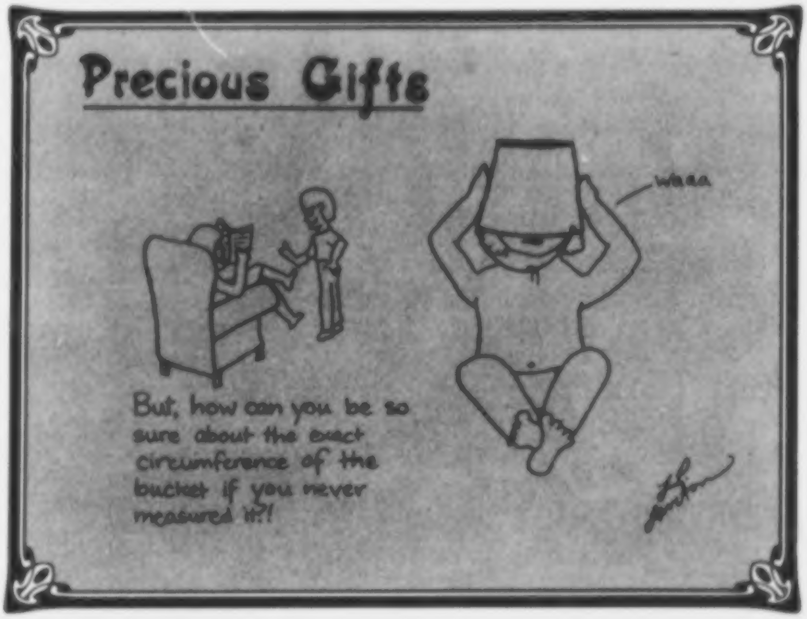
Linda Silverman, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist and Director of the Gifted Child Development Center in Denver, CO.

Kindness in words creates confidence.

Kindness in thinking creates profoundness.

Kindness in giving creates love.

— Lao-tzu —


Precious Gifts
waaa
But, how can you be so sure about the exact circumference of the bucket if you never measured it?!

Jana Waters

LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

Money & Mandates

Our Influence is Growing...

In January of 1987, the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted compiled a comprehensive survey outlining the current state of gifted education in our country. The results indicated that as of 1987, 25 states had mandates to serve the gifted. A mandate requires that all gifted children in the state be served. Another 16 states had permissive funding without a mandate, which means that state funds **may** be used for gifted programs. Fifteen states required that every identified gifted child receive an Individual Educational Plan (IEP), 39 states had at least one full-time state coordinator.

Haves and Have Nots

Local and state dollars spent on gifted and talented programs varied considerably. States with a strong commitment to gifted education included Florida (68 million), Georgia (23.3 million) Pennsylvania (23 million) California (31.3 million), North Carolina (17 million), South Carolina (15 million) New York (13.3 million), Ohio (11.9 million) and Virginia (11.4 million).

On the opposite end of the spectrum, New Jersey and Colorado allocated $200,000 on G/T programs for 1987. No figures were available from Alabama, Alaska, Iowa, Maryland, Vermont, and Wisconsin. For 1988-1989, Florida increased their allocation to almost $70 million, while Colorado reduced its commitment to $75,000. The old adage seems to apply: "While the rich get richer, the poor get poorer."

FEDERAL FUNDING NOW AVAILABLE!

Clearly, significant amounts of money are needed so that each state can provide effective programming for their gifted children. An excellent step in this direction has come in the form of the new federal "**Jacob Javits Gifted And Talented Students Education Act**." On August 9, 1988, the Conference Committee on Education Appropriations for both houses of Congress agreed to fund the act for almost $8 million. Funds will probably not be available until 1989. Instead of funneling money through the states, funds may be applied for directly to support research and model programs.

The act has several major sections including: re-establishment of the federal office, program development, training of teachers and Ph.D.-level personnel, curriculum development, and identification of disadvantaged and minority gifted students. A national center for research in gifted education will also be created, with one-third of the funds being allocated for this purpose. The site has not yet been determined.

The next Legislative Review will provide a detailed analysis of the Javits Act and discuss its implications for parents and educators. Charles Radcliffe, NAGC Legislative Counsel, will be attending the NAGC Convention in Orlando in November. He will be discussing the act and will be available to answer your questions. We'll pass on any new information he shares. ■

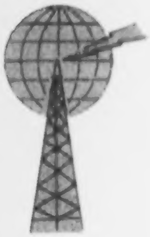
Jana Waters, M.S., is Associate Director of the Gifted Child Development Center in Denver, Colorado.

(Continued from page 19) and its related catalog items was a boon to creative productivity for students. A serendipitous bonus of the project was the improvement and refinement I noted in the students' writing skills. Even verbally gifted youngsters often fail to write with clarity, precision, and conciseness. Writing copy for the items in their catalogs engaged students in an activity which required them to focus on exactness and precision in the use of words. In many cases they needed to move beyond simple descriptions of appearance, and were required to describe in detail how a catalog item worked or operated.

The final products were highly creative. One 8-year-old boy created a catalog of mechanical birds which included the rare "chocolate chickadee" as well as the more common "jail bird." Another child created a catalog of survival items future colonists will need to settle Mars. The Reagan Products Catalog featured such Ron and Nancy memorabilia as a decorative gumball machine which dispensed monogrammed (RWR & NDR) gumballs. A dream homes catalog was designed in the manner of the free homes catalogs found at the entrance to the local grocery store. The contents featured elaborate drawings of unique homes found around the world: a Chinese houseboat, cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde, an Alaskan igloo, and a Bavarian castle.

Serendipity may be lurking around, just waiting to be discovered in the junk mail you receive. Do not throw those catalogs and calendars away. Turn them into teaching/learning experiences for creative and gifted children. ■

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Gifted Education at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs and editor of *G/T News*.



ANTENNA. . . .

Current Developments in Gifted Education

What is the most critical—and current—issue in education of the gifted and talented?

The response of this column is simple: AWARENESS

...**Awareness** that gifted children exist in our classrooms and in our homes...**Awareness** that they learn in a different manner...**Awareness** that they develop at an accelerated pace...**Awareness** that they are unique and must have appropriate schooling and parenting.

"No other special group of children has been alternately embraced and repelled with so much vigor by educators and laypersons alike," states Abraham Tannenbaum (1983) in describing the cyclical nature of interest in the gifted. As we look at developments in advocacy, teacher education and funding, it appears that the cycle is currently at a peak.

Research indicates that at least 38 states have active parent/educator advocacy associations for gifted/talented education, with membership ranging between 50 and 6,000.

Services provided by state associations include: newsletters and other informational material on the nature and needs of gifted children, conferences providing teacher inservice and parenting information, legislative networking, recognition of individuals who have performed outstanding service to gifted education, and scholarship funding for summer opportunities for children. Another encouraging development in gifted education is that at least 101 colleges and universities in 38 states offer graduate degree programs in education of the gifted. In addition, 20 institutions of higher learning in 12 states operate gifted education resource centers, which include such functions as teacher training, program development and evaluation, and parent consultation.

Funding for gifted and talented education continues to increase on the state level. A survey of gifted/talented expenditures during the 1986/87 school year reports a total of $229,238,702 for the 50 states, an increase of $47,721,246 since 1984/85. Nineteen states have special requirements for teachers of the gifted and talented.

On the national level, $8 million has been appropriated for the first year of the "Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act." This amount exceeds the highest appropriation under the old act, repealed in 1981, by $1.75 million. *(See the Legislative Review column on page 21 for more information.)*

An increase in awareness? Yes!

All of the above reflects a growing understanding of, and commitment to, gifted children and their advanced developmental needs. A sense of optimism pervades gifted education.

A note of caution? Yes, again.

We must remember that the cycle of interest in the gifted also has valleys of apathy. But the antidote to apathy is keeping gifted education visible through continuous awareness efforts. ■

REFERENCES

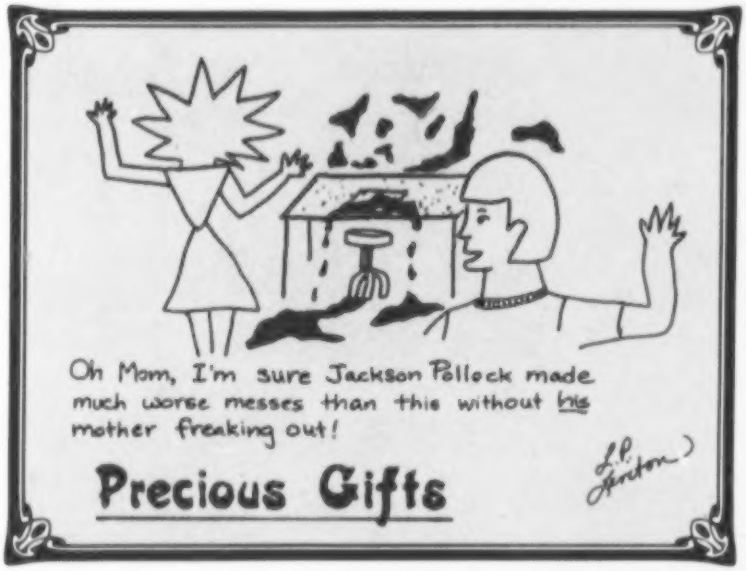
Mitchell, M. (1988). The latest national assessment of gifted education. *Roeper Review, 10*(4), 239-240.

Parker & Karnes, A. (1987). Graduate degree programs in education of the gifted: Program contents and services offered. *Roeper Review*, *9*(3), 172-176.

Roderick, (1988). State associations for gifted/talented education. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 32*(3), 327-329.

Tannenbaum, J. (1983). *Gifted children*. NY: Macmillan.

Dorothy Knopper is State Consultant on the Gifted, Colorado Department of Education and "Open Space" columnist for *Roeper Review*.


Oh Mom, I'm sure Jackson Pollock made much worse messes than this without his mother freaking out!
Precious Gifts
L.P. Fenton

Linda Sinclair

from parent to parent

For the parents of gifted children, rules and responsibilities can be difficult to delineate. Trying to find the delicate balance between expecting too much and not expecting enough is hard in any case, but even more so for the parents of a child who may differ greatly in chronological, mental and emotional maturity levels. Mark and Linda Leviton, of Claremont, California, have learned to let their children and the needs of the family lead them into a system that works.

"Most of Michael's responsibilities have evolved," according to Linda. Michael, 8, has two siblings; Joshua, 4 1/2, and Miriam 1 1/2. "We wanted to balance the relationship between Michael's needs, skills and wants, and the family's desire for a relatively placid lifestyle."

"With the goal of helping things run more smoothly (less stressfully), we have developed a reinforcement schedule that seems to shift more of the responsibility to the child. Michael, like many gifted children, is a collector, so we started using a star reward system for accomplishing specific tasks or controlling certain behaviors. We give him a minimal allowance for his general participation as a family member. But he augments that by earning stars for specific tasks and responsibilities. For example, he has five areas for which he can earn a star each day; if he completes every task, he could earn 50 cents for that day, which he could spend toward one of his collections."

"We choose the tasks together. Some examples of star items would be getting dressed or putting things away without being reminded. His brother gets to choose one, and currently it is for Michael to play a game each day with him."

"For Michael and Joshua, who are so different but have to share a room, we have used the stars as a method of conflict resolution. For instance, Michael decided to start saving his star earnings for a Nintendo system, and Joshua wanted to help. Between themselves, they decided it was fair enough for both of them to do their best and pool their earnings, rather than having to match dollar for dollar. Now they are encouraging each other to do better. A parent can't orchestrate that. The star system seems to provide opportunities for negotiations and judgment, both skills in which gifted children seem to excel."

"This system has not only helped the children learn more about being responsible, and the value of working toward something they want, but it has also helped Mark and I as parents. We are learning patience – that intervention is frequently less valuable than allowing children the time to grapple with a particular problem and its many viable solutions. While not always successful, the star system has certainly allowed all of us to appreciate how resourceful and capable our children can be." ■

Linda Sinclair is a freelance writer from Denver, Colorado and parent of a highly gifted child.

Parent to Parent is your forum for sharing ideas with other parents of gifted children. We want to hear your story—what has worked, or not worked, for your family. Please send your name, address, and phone number to *Understanding Our Gifted*, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122, and we will contact you for details.

Understanding Our Gifted™

Don't Delay. Return This Order Form Today!

☐ New Subscriber

☐ Gift Subscription (for your friends, teachers, relatives)

☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD

Card #________________

Expiration Date____________

____
Signature

YES! Start my subscription to *Understanding Our Gifted™*. Payment is enclosed or charge my VISA or MASTER CARD. (Just $30 a year) – (Canada - $35 U.S.; Foreign $37.50 U.S.) NO RISK GUARANTEE: If at any time you decide *Understanding Our Gifted* is not for you, write 'cancel' across the label and return it for a full refund of unmailed issues.

NAME__________________________

COURTESY OF (if gift) ________________

ADDRESS ________________________

CITY____________STATE________ZIP______

Make checks payable to SNOWPEAK PUBLISHING, INC.™, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122 (303) 798-0986

THE BULLETIN BOARD

This space is for you!

Are you a teacher in search of creative math materials?
Are you a counselor looking for other counselors concerned with the gifted?
Are you a parent of a gifted toddler wondering about home stimulation?

We are happy to use THE BULLETIN BOARD in any way that will serve you. This will enable you to support each others needs. Send us your request and we'll print it on the bulletin board as space permits.

Please send us suggestions for topics for future articles and columns. Let us know what you like and why, and what else we can do to make this newsletter responsive to your needs.

ANNOUNCEMENT

A national conference is being planned in commemoration of the golden anniversary of Leta Stetter Hollingworth at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln October 19th-21st, 1989. The conference is entitled: "The Legacy of Leta Hollingworth: Her Contributions to Psychology and Gifted Education." Some of the most important figures in gifted education will be presenting at this conference in honor of the woman whose vision gave birth to this field. Please mark your calendars now and ask your local and state organizations to reserve those dates. We hope that there will be no conflicting state conferences that weekend.

NEXT ISSUE

FOCUS:

HIGHLY GIFTED

ACCELERATION AND EARLY ENTRANCE
Holly Hultgren

HOMESCHOOLING THE GIFTED
Kathi Kearney

SURVIVING THE BLESSING
Ann Boyer

Throughout the millennia
of history, it has been
the normal experience of
mankind that only a few of the
gifted individuals in a
population have had the
chance to develop their gifts.
Generally speaking,
individuals whose gifts have
been discovered and cultivated
have been as chance
outcroppings of precious rock,
while the great reserves
of human talent lay
undiscovered below.
-J.W. Gardner-

UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED™
P.O. Box 3489
Littleton, CO 80122

BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
Littleton, CO
Permit No. 493

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED™

Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

Volume 1, Issue 3

January 1989

A Case For Acceleration

Holly M. Hultgren

The Case of Kurt

This description will illustrate the difficulty one faces in making the decision to accelerate a student, in this case by multiple grade skipping and subject acceleration. A bright boy, quiet and a little slow to develop motor skills, Kurt began kindergarten at five years. By the time he had finished fourth grade, he was academically well in advance of other 10 year olds. His parents initiated a request to have him skip the fifth grade and begin sixth grade at age ten. At the same time Kurt was completing his second year of private tutoring in German and was working weekly with a mentor on paleontology projects.

Kurt did skip 5th grade, and after four months of observing his adjustment to 6th grade, his parents requested that he be permitted to transfer full time to the junior high, where he had taken 7th grade honors math. They cited as reasons "the fact that the 6th grade curriculum was largely review," "his current elementary school demonstrated no effort nor interest in trying to meet his needs in the classroom or in the gifted

(Continued on page 8)

FOCUS ON:

HIGHLY GIFTED

INSIDE

SPECIAL FEATURE:

Surviving The Blessing
Ann Boyer 5

The Hidden Gifted Learner
Suzanne Perry 3

Parenting The Gifted
Elizabeth Meckstroth ... 4

Instructional Strategies
Joyce VanTassel-Baska . 6

The Reading Room
Stephanie Tolan 7

Personality Plus
Linda Silverman 11

The Highly Gifted
Kathi Kearney................ 14

Home Stretch
Felice Kaufmann 18

Creative Ventures And Encounters
Jerry Flack 19

Current Developments in Gifted Education
Dorothy Knopper 22

From Parent to Parent
Linda Sinclair 23

Homeschooling Gifted Children

Kathi Kearney

It is 9:30 Monday morning, a sunny October day. Alan, age 13 and Isaac, age 16, are not in school – or are they? At the kitchen table, Alan works on algebra problems from a college text. Isaac is curled up in a living room chair, engrossed in the works of black writers from the turn of the century. On the wall is a portrait of Charles Darwin, drawn by Isaac last year after an extended study of the theory of evolution. Upstairs, an entomology collection of over 300 insects, catalogued and labeled, shares space with the more typical accoutrements of a young man's room. And lined up on the shelves, in the bedroom, living room, kitchen, and hallway, are hundreds and hundreds of books, most of them classic literature – and most already read by the two boys, some of them several times over. The boys' mother is kneading bread in the kitchen – and tutoring Alan in math. Alan and Isaac, and their parents, are part of the rapidly-growing contemporary homeschooling movement, which includes a large number of gifted children nationwide.

What do Alan and Isaac have in common with Thomas Edison, Andrew Wyeth,

(Continued on page 12)

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends,

We salute Colorado for the largest number of subscribers and California, Florida, Michigan, and Washington—all tied for second place in subscriptions to *Understanding our Gifted*. Thanks for your support!

I'm delighted to announce another birth—*Advanced Development*, a journal on adult giftedness. Some people think giftedness is just a school-age phenomenon and that it disappears later in life. I'd like a dollar for each person I've met who "used to be gifted." Others believe that giftedness in adults can only be measured by world acclaim. Success in adult life is frequently equated with monetary gain, status and fame. But eminence and Yuppie giftedness place the concept within a competitive structure.

The conception of giftedness as a developmental phenomenon gives it permanence in the personality structure. Once a stage of development is attained—like walking or talking—it doesn't evaporate. Nor does it have to be proven over and over again through external achievements.

There is an abundance of unsung, unrecognized giftedness in the adult population. My research shows that parents of gifted children and teachers of the gifted are often gifted themselves. But convincing them of this is nearly impossible.

The models of giftedness we hold for the adult population are almost entirely achievement oriented. We need a new lens through which to perceive giftedness in adults. And *Advanced Development* provides that lens. In this publication, adult giftedness is defined as the advanced development of human values, such as integrity, compassion, responsibility, altruism, authenticity, harmony, moral courage, commitment, autonomy, empathy. Advanced development is the deepening of the personality structure.

Contents of the premier issue include:

- ☐ *Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration*
- ☐ *'State of the Art' Moral Development: Moral Development in the Post-Kohlbergian Age*
- ☐ *Hand in Hand: An interview with Annemarie and George Roeper*
- ☐ *Parents of the Extraordinarily Gifted*
- ☐ *Living Out the Promise of High Potential: Perception of 100 Gifted Women*
- ☐ *Adjustment of Gifted Adults*
- ☐ *Giftedness as Multilevel Potential: A Clinical Interview*

We invite you as gifted adults to read our first issue of *Advanced Development*. You may find a perspective that speaks to you in a deeply meaningful way.

Linda Silverman

Understanding Our Gifted™

Published by: Snowpeak Publishing, Inc.™

Publisher
Linda Mancini

Editor
Dr. Linda Kreger Silverman

Column Editors
Dr. Felice Kaufmann, *University of Kentucky*
Dorothy Knopper, *State Consultant on the Gifted, Colorado Department of Education*
Martha Morelock, *Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study at Tufts University*
Dr. Suzanne Perry, *Aurora Public Schools in Colorado*
Linda Sinclair, *Freelance Writer, Denver, Colorado*
Stephanie Tolan, *Author and Consultant, Waterford, New York*
Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska, *College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia*

Advisory Board and Regular Contributors
Dr. Nicholas Colangelo, *University of Iowa*
Dr. James Delisle, *Kent State University*
Dr. Jerry Flack, *University of Colorado, Colorado Springs*
Dr. Holly Hultgren, *University of Denver*
Dr. Nancy Jackson, *University of Washington*
Kathi Kearney, *Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children, Auburn, Maine*
Elizabeth Meckstroth, *Counselor and Author, Dayton, Ohio*
Dr. Wendy Roedell, *Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, ESD 121, in Seattle, Washington*
Dr. Annemarie Roeper, *Co-Founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the Roeper Review*

***Understanding Our Gifted*, a *SNOWPEAK* publication, (ISSN 1040-1350) is published bimonthly by Snowpeak Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122. Subscriptions are $30 for 1 year (6 issues). Back issues/single copies are $6.50. Canadian subscriptions are $35.00 U.S. Foreign subscriptions are $37.50 U.S. Third class postage paid at Littleton, CO. Subscription inquiries should be sent to the publishing office. For subscription address changes, send mailing label along with new address to *UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED*, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO, 80122, eight weeks before moving. Material in *Understanding Our Gifted* may be copied for personal use only. No material may be reproduced for publication without written permission of author and publisher. Appropriate credit must be given.** **Copyright 1988, SNOWPEAK PUBLISHING, INC. All rights reserved.**

Suzanne M. Perry

THE HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

The Gifted Underachiever

"Has ability to do better," was written across the bottom of the report card Robert's mother found crumpled in the bottom of his back pack. It wasn't a news flash for her. She had been reading similar comments for quite some time now on report cards, daily papers, conference requests – anything that came home from school. Somehow the repetition of the message didn't make it any less painful for her or, she suspected, for Robert.

She thought back to Robert's kindergarten and first grade years. He had been the gifted little blond guy with the goofy grin and eager answers that teachers adored. Robert had *loved* school – had resented the weekends for getting in the way of all he was learning and doing in the classroom. What on earth had happened? How could the little fellow who had won first place in the school-wide science fair as a second grader have evolved into a sixth grader who "wasn't working up to his abilities"?

Quite frankly, she hardly recognized the blond young man slumped in front of the TV set who claimed, "I don't have any homework tonight, so get off my back." She knew from experience that tomorrow when homework is collected Robert would insist, "I already turned it in" or " I gave it to the substitute," or " I did it but it must have fallen out of my notebook on the bus."

It had all started with his straight A grades slowly declining to B's, then C's. Now it was uncommon for him to even receive passing marks. Daydreaming in class replaced his alert attentiveness. His desk was a mess and his bedroom a disaster area.

What Happened?

Underachievement appears to be a learned behavior rather than an inborn physical trait (Delisle, 1980). Where had Robert learned to underachieve? Sometimes underachievement is encouraged by parents and teachers who have the best of intentions. The parent tries to set high standards for the child's work, "helps" him with assigned tasks to make sure they fit the standards, places the child in competitive situations inappropriate to the child's age or inclinations. The teacher, in an attempt to be caring, lets the child off the hook on missed deadlines, organizes the child when the child has trouble organizing him or herself, either decreases expectations or unrealistically expects the impossible. The good news is that, being a learned behavior, underachievement *can* be turned around.

What Can Be Done To Help?

Dr. Sylvia Rimm (1985), a psychologist who specializes in work with gifted underachievers, suggests that much underachievement is actually related to a need for attention. Underachievers may manipulate parents and teachers to give them attention by needing "help" on their school work or to get organized. They are even willing to settle for the negative attention they receive by not completing work or by turning in work of inferior quality. Parents and teachers need to set up situations in which the child is required to work independently on tasks that are both challenging and yet realistically achievable. The attention should not come until the task is completed. Rimm suggests that helping too soon is really "a vote of no confidence" which reinforces the child's perception that s/he can't achieve without help. Once the child is successfully completing tasks, the focus can move to the quality of the product. Various rewards may be offered to recognize successfully completed tasks.

Turning around underachievement takes time and self discipline on the part of both parents and teachers working with the student. Achievement patterns most easily replace underachievement patterns in the early grades, but successful conversions have been reported all the way through to the college age student and adult. Teaching the individual strategies for coping not only with success but also with failure, frustration and criticism is essential (Whitmore, 1980).

Probably Robert's next report card won't show a dramatic return to the A's of his early school career. He won't become organized and self motivated overnight. However, with a planned and consistent program of support, frequent communication between home and school, and with the expression of unconditional love from his parents, Robert will have the tools he needs to move back onto the road to achievement. ■

REFERENCES

Delisle, J. (1980). Preventative counseling for the gifted adolescent: From words to action. *Roeper Review*, 3 (2), 21-25.

Rimm, S. (1985, September). How to reach the underachiever. *Instructor*, pp. 73-75.

Whitmore, J. (1980). *Giftedness, conflict and underachievement*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Suzanne Perry, Ph.D., is Instructional Resource for Project Think in the Aurora Public Schools in Colorado, and author of the children's book, *Giftedness: Living with it and Liking it.*

Elizabeth Meckstroth

PARENTING

...or Play With Half A Deck!

"They don't know, but they don't know that they don't know!" could express the exasperation parents of gifted children feel about some school personnel. Some parents fear that if they appeal to a teacher to adjust the curriculum to meet their child's unique needs the teacher will retaliate against their child. Parents often lack role models for sharing responsibility with the teacher to provide appropriate school programming for their children.

Research shows that parents tend to know their child's unique needs and abilities better than anyone else's assessment (Jacobs, 1971). Since less than a third of identified gifted children are being appropriately served by their school programs and few teachers have had any specialized training in gifted education, parents can forgive school personnel if they only provide appropriate education for 95% of their enrollment (Stone, 1988). But can they forgive themselves for not providing educators with essential information that will enable the teacher to respond to their child's needs? That is like asking the teacher to play with half a deck!

Much like the proverbial three men discovering an elephant, we each hold a few pieces of the puzzle. And, since if all you have is a hammer, everything tends to look like a nail, parents and teachers are limited by their experience and are apt to apply familiar programming.

In his recent book, *Our Children and Our Country*, Former Secretary of Education, William J. Bennett (1988), explains that the quality of education is not primarily determined by the amount of money spent for each child. Instead, quality is significantly affected by the cooperative, supportive attitudes and involvement of the school personnel, the parents, and the community.

Often, the most significant factor determining how a teacher feels about a child is how that teacher experiences support by that child's parents. Parents must assume responsibility to create win-win synergy with the school to provide appropriate school programming for their child. ■

REFERENCES

Bennett, W. J. (1988). *Our Children and Our Country*, New York: Simon and Schuster.

Ginsberg-Riggs, G. (1988, February). Presentation to NAGC Mid-Winter Institute Forum for Parents. Phoenix, AZ.

Jacobs J. (1971). Effectiveness of teacher and parent identification of gifted children as a function of school level. *Psychology in the Schools*, *8*, 140-142.

Stone, (1988). Second-guessing the experts. *Mensa Bulletin*, *319*, 14-16.

Elizabeth Meckstroth is a therapist and consultant in Dayton, Ohio and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*.

BUILDING BLOCKS

- **Be a welcome person in your child's school.** Establish yourself in the school as someone who cares about the welfare of the entire school. Show up; volunteer for a visible position; get to know the players!
- Consider how you can **enhance the system's** needs, control, prestige.
- **Invest in your personal relationships with school personnel.** Find some common interest and express, "I'm with you." Listen carefully. Smile!
- **Ask your child** how you can help and what you could discuss with the teacher.
- **Express appreciation for the teacher** for a specific behavior, perhaps in a note. Request a conference to explore how you might help the teacher.
- **Talk with the teacher about your child's strengths, interests, and sensitivities** as perceived at home and school. Your child may be very different at home!
- **Monitor and document.** Keep a scrapbook or notebook to validate information. Refer to published material to expand and substantiate options for your child to **choose** adjustments for his development.
- **Subscribe to gifted periodicals** and pass them on to the teachers.
- **If you are angry, stay home** (Ginsberg-Riggs, 1988). Go to school when you are ready to support and negotiate. Always offer to help and express appreciation for the teacher's time and care.

SURVIVING THE BLESSING

Ann Boyer

How do you picture the parents of highly gifted children? As bursting with pride over the promise of their progeny? As having aggressively pushed the child to accomplish some achievement that has brought the family acclaim? The truth is much more complex and painful.

To explore what life is like for such parents in order to provide useful information for others like them as well as for school people, this author has undertaken a continuing study using in-depth home interviews, support group discussions, and informal conversations. In this article illustrations and verbatim unreferenced quotations come from parents whose children have scored over 160 on the *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale* (Form L-M), from which ratio scores were derived where necessary.

Parents of highly gifted offspring must face – in addition to the usual struggle of raising children – a number of demands that exert unusual stress, but also offer opportunities for intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual development. We can look at these demands as a series of critical issues or crises.

RESPONDING TO THE TEST RESULTS

The first crisis occurs with the announcement of the test results. Unless someone perceives a problem, most children do not receive individual psychological testing. Very young highly gifted children are not usually perceived as problematical and young families' budgets are likely to be especially limited; however, as the age for kindergarten or first grade approaches, parents of highly gifted children are likely to wonder about discrepancies between what their child is already doing and what is likely to be introduced in school. Conscientious parents who are able to do so may then seek testing. "What to do about school?" is the question on their minds as they approach the psychologist's office.

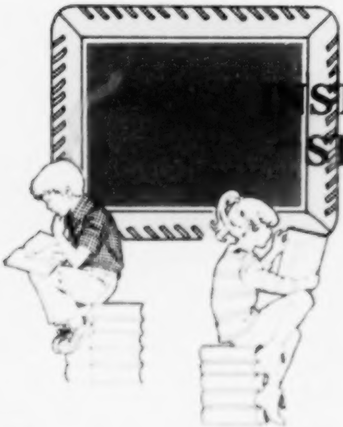
Receiving the test results initiates a crisis of proportions probably not anticipated by the parents and probably not imagined by the general public. Being told that one's child is not just somewhat different, but dramatically different, perhaps one in a million, can be both thrilling and terrifying.

Common parental responses fall into several categories: denial, acceptance, problem-solving, integration, and grief. Almost all parents manifest some degree of *denial*: "I can't believe it," "Could the test be wrong?" or "Maybe the tester is biased" (e.g., because he knows my spouse). Even parents who are themselves psychological or educational professionals and knowledgeable about testing may have such thoughts, which demonstrate vividly how difficult it is to absorb such news.

Either rapidly or somewhat more gradually, most parents do begin a process of acceptance, with some comment such as, "Well! We knew she was bright, but we didn't realize *how* bright!" or "If this is so, I can see why he was more interested in taking apart his tricycle than riding it."

Many parents' responses show some kind of attempt to *problem-solve*: "How do we raise a child like this?" and, of course, the original question with a new intensity, "What in the world do we do about school?" Parents also begin to try to *integrate* the new information into their perspectives on family and self: "My husband's family is very intelligent; she must get it from his side," or "I never liked school, was bored and goofed off; will I be able to raise him to take better advantage of educational opportunities?" or "He's a lot like his older sister; maybe she's this bright, though we never had her tested" or "I guess everyone in my family is pretty able so maybe that's why I didn't recognize how gifted she was."

Some parents report feelings of *grief* although they less frequently mention these immediately to the testing psychologist. Social workers and others who work with parents of handicapped children have learned that they need to mourn the loss of the fantasized "normal child." Parents of highly gifted children may need to deal with a similar loss. From now on, life with this child will not be normal. Milestones will not march by with Gesell Institute regularity. Mother and father will not be able to read up and be prepared for any aspect of parenting; this child will deal with issues sometimes before one even gets to the library, or in such a different way that even books *(Continued on page 17)*



INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Joyce VanTassel-Baska

The use of inquiry techniques in gifted programs has long been supported in the literature as well as by enthusiastic teachers who see its results with this type of learner. Why are inquiry approaches so successful with the gifted? There appear to be several reasons. First of all, the gifted learner generally can handle formal operational thought more readily than can other learners. Thus the "discovery" approach to learning is accomplished more easily. For example, the gifted can gain insights about discrepant events in science within a class period. Another reason inquiry techniques work well with this population is their idiosyncratic problem-solving strategies. By focusing on the learner's ability to construct knowledge for herself, educators can honor many different ways of approaching and carrying out the learning task; in that way, they can accommodate the varying cognitive styles of the gifted. Lastly, inquiry approaches work with this population because it is problem-centered. The gifted love a good mystery, a puzzle, ambiguity and paradox. Inquiry provides a learning context where the gifted learner's curiosity can roam unchecked and set the stage for these learners to set up their own problems to be solved in future independent investigations.

What is inquiry exactly? At the most expansive level, it is creating a climate of mutual investigation into a problem, issue, or idea worthy of our attention. It is structuring a situation or activity in such a way as to elicit high level thinking from learners. It is asking open-ended and suggestive questions that lead the learner to think through a problem, issue, or idea in a very deliberate way. The example below may provide a better understanding of the inquiry process.

The example below of an inquiry lesson includes the nature of the activity, key questions, grouping arrangements, and anticipated outcomes of the lesson. The richness of the discovery, however, is left to individual gifted learners. ■

Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Ed.D., is Jody and Layton Smith Professor of Education at William and Mary College, in Williamsburg, Virginia. She is editor of *Comprehensive Curriculum for Gifted Learners.*

A. **STIMULUS PROBLEM.** Each student is given a Japanese print that depicts a scene in nature, some with human figures, some without. The inquiry task is to study the picture and provide written commentary for each of the following questions:
   1. *What objects do you see in your picture?*
   2. *What ideas does your picture convey?*
   3. *What feelings does your picture evoke?*
   4. *If you were to identify with an object in your picture, what would it be and why?*
   5. *Based on your impressions, thoughts, and feelings about your picture, can you synthesize your reactions to the picture graphically or in written form?*

B. Based on individual responses, each student shares her picture with 2-3 other students and discusses individual reactions. The group then responds to the following questions in a discussion context:
   1. *What similarities and differences are there among your pictures?*
   2. *Compare and contrast your individual reactions to each picture. What did you discover?*
   3. *What generalizations might you make about the pictures based on your experience?*
   4. *What generalizations might you make about each other based on your experience?*

C. Based on group sharing, the total class engages in a debriefing around each group's perceptions. Pictures and ideas are shared across the 5-6 groups in the room. The total group then responds to the following questions about their experiences:
   1. *What do we know about the Japanese culture based on your experiences with these prints? (i.e. about its philosophy, its art, its geography, its religion, etc.)*
   2. *What did we learn about each other from this experience?*
   3. *What important generalizations might you make about cultural understanding from this experience?*

E. Key generalizations that might be derived from this inquiry lesson include:
   1. *A culture is represented in its art at a symbolic level.*
   2. *Studying artifacts (i.e. Japanese prints) helps us understand ourselves as well as others.*
   3. *Cultural understanding is dependent on understanding multiple perspectives.*
   4. *Knowing other people's perceptions about a given situation or problem helps us appreciate rather than denigrate individual differences.*

Stephanie S. Tolan

THE READING ROOM

Welcome back to the reading room. In the first two visits, we talked about humorous books with exceptionally gifted characters. This time, we'll introduce books with a more serious approach. *Dorp Dead*, by Julia Cunningham and *A Time to Fly Free* by Stephanie S. Tolan.

Yes, that first title is correct—*Dorp Dead*. Its central character, Gilly Ground, says of himself, "I am ferociously intelligent for my age and at ten I hide this. It is a weapon for defense...I purposely never learn to spell, which for the simple indicates stupidity." Gilly is an orphan who lives in a bell-clanging orphanage he hates, able to be alone with silence only in a ruined tower he finds on a wooded hill nearby.

He is sent to live with "Master Kobalt," an eccentric laddermaker who lives in luxury behind locked doors and windows. There Gilly trades his independence and selfhood for material comfort he has never known, until he realizes the truth about his abusive master. He must escape or die.

This short, brilliantly written novel can be enjoyed on its initial level as a novel of suspense and escape. But there are almost as many levels as there are pages, so that a single reading could lead to many days of discussion. *Dorp Dead* is an allegory about the need to give and accept love, and to put self above the false comfort of order and security. Gilly's intelligence is tested in his escape effort, and it is essential to his survival, but it is not enough. Love must come to his aid, and only in a surrounding of love can Gilly learn to treasure his brilliance, not as a weapon, but as part of a valued self. This is one of those very special books worth giving a place of honor on any book shelf, so that it can be read again and again.

A novel that handles the issue of self-acceptance in a very different way is my book *A Time to Fly Free*. (No longer in print, it can be found only in libraries.) Ten year old Josh, who has also coped with his exceptional intelligence by camouflaging it, finds the masquerade no longer possible as fifth grade begins with a teacher who perceives his messiness and lack of interest in homework as lack of ability.

He leaves school and, with the aid of his stepfather, convinces his mother to allow him a "leave of absence," so that he can work with Rafferty, an old man who devotes his life to saving injured sea birds. Helping Rafferty, Josh learns more than he wants to know about man's inhumanity to other life forms. He also begins to learn both the power and the limitations of his own independence. Used in some gifted classrooms, this book can lead to discussions of such issues as learning outside of school, the uses of intellectual camouflage, and the place of man in the natural order. ■

Stephanie Tolan, from Waterford, New York, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*.

program," and "Kurt has repeatedly initiated dialogue concerning his wanting more challenges in school." His parents felt that he had made friends in the junior high and that additional acceleration would benefit him.

In response the principal of Kurt's elementary school wrote:

> Primarily, our concerns center on Kurt's social and emotional maturity. Our observations indicate that he does not interact easily with students in his classes. We believe that he has a hard time making friends, possesses an air of superiority, finds it difficult to discuss his feelings with teachers and is generally withdrawn from others at school...Kurt's responses are unlike others in his class. He likes to work independently and will complete his assignments... However, we would like to see him show more initiative and creativity related to his school work and assignments...Kurt's strongest areas are in math and science, skills in language arts are not quite as strong. In addition, language mechanics are somewhat weak...We cannot support your request for Kurt's placement in 7th grade...he would be more successful and would become a more well rounded student if left in the 6th grade.

An appeal process was offered, which Kurt's parents followed. They responded with a letter that described Kurt as sensitive and "extremely frustrated" with the perceived injustice of classroom discipline. They cited incidents where teachers "asked him not to raise his hand in science, because he knew all the answers." His withdrawal was directly related to the request that he not actively participate. They felt that he was a different person around "kids who are his intellectual peers" rather than his chronological age. His motivation was evident in home projects with geology, biology and chemistry. "He chooses not to share his knowledge and projects at school because other 6th grade kids, through lack of understanding, will make fun of him."

Kurt's parents sought letters of recommendation from other adults who knew of his abilities. The German tutor described Kurt as "inquisitive, conscientious, and capable. He has a very quiet and well-mannered demeanor." The geology tutor, who interestingly had been accelerated in school himself, described Kurt as "remarkably mature in his outlook and quite capable of almost any task he wishes to do."

> On his own he has established a curating system that is far superior to anything developed by most collectors. Furthermore he is not just a collector. He is interested in the scientific meaning of the materials he has collected... I believe it would be a great tragedy for him to remain in the elementary school where he appears to be stifled. Kurt is a very rare kind of person; he has the kind of motivation that often leads to greatness. When I was a university professor, it was always a joy to have such a student appear—and it was not often.

The school administrator in charge of the appeal board for the decision interviewed Kurt prior to making his recommendation. A former high school teacher and principal, he felt comfortable discussing options in person with Kurt. It became apparent that Kurt was showing two different sides of himself. The elementary school perception was accurate, but limited in perspective.

Ultimately the decision was made to accelerate Kurt to 7th grade at the semester break. He completed the year with a 3.85 grade point average. In addition he joined the Science Olympiad team that finished among the top five in the state. He was also chosen by his teammates to be captain of the school Quiz Bowl team, which won first place in the district. The following year Kurt enrolled in 8th grade honors English and History, and 9th grade honors Math. The only subject he did not like was gym, in which he tolerated being 2 years younger than those with whom he had to compete athletically. It is a bit frightening to imagine what would have happened to Kurt had he not been given these opportunities to progress within the existing system.

* * *

Acceleration should be a routine part of the educational program for highly gifted students. Both in and out of favor in the past thirty years, it is still among the most misunderstood and controversial of all approaches to education programming. Claims that it hurries development and forces children to deal with social situations far in advance of their maturity level are cited as negatives by psychologists and educators alike.

This article describes types of acceleration, lists pros and cons, and summarizes research and case studies. The conclusion reached is that there is no universal answer. The decision to accelerate or not must be based upon the information and options available.

Elkind (1988) cautions against the use of the term "acceleration" to describe interventions designed to enhance and maximize children's intellectual potential and mental growth. Fearing that the term implies something done to the child, rather than an educational accommodation for the child, Elkind prefers the term "promotion." In fact, this article includes in its definition of acceleration any adjustments in the traditional educational program sequence designed to accommodate a better match between ability level and curricular offering.

Among the strategies addressed are the following:

- *early entrance to kindergarten*
- *grade skipping*
- *subject acceleration*
- *continuous progress/flexible paced curriculum*
- *early completion of junior or senior high school*
- *advanced placement or credit by examination*
- *early entrance to college or university*

Other sources cite somewhat different lists of acceleration strategies, basically covering the same provisions (Brody & Benbow, 1987; Sisk, 1988). More lengthy descriptions of these options are available in references provided with this article.

In the course of ten years of researching attitudes about acceleration, this author has asked more than 200 administrators, teachers, parents and students about the advantages and disadvantages of these types of acceleration. The lists in the adjoining boxes show typical responses.

The listed advantages of acceleration are clear. Obviously a strategy that addresses so many learning needs of gifted children has much to recommend it. One additional advantage often missed, though remarkable in its simplicity, is the fact that students who are accelerated are utilizing educational provisions that exist within a regular classroom and do not necessarily require additional program funding. Speaking to the educational opportunities these strategies offer, Kulik and Kulik (1984) performed a meta-analysis of 26 research studies and found that accelerated gifted students perform almost a year ahead of gifted, same-age control students and about as well as gifted older students. Other studies found no negative affects on attitudes and social adjustment or success in later life (Brody & Benbow, 1987).

The list of disadvantages must be systematically addressed by parents and educators struggling with the decision to accelerate a student. Van Tassel-Baska (1981) provides an excellent set of criteria to consider when making decisions about accelerating students. Among the considerations are *the nature of individual students and the degree and form of their giftedness; the students' preference for an accelerated setting; acceleration of a group of students (basically more than one alone) for interaction and support; the need for additional program modifications, including enrichment and counseling.* These factors must be carefully weighed, in order to assure a successful experience.

ADVANTAGES OF ACCELERATION

- Reduction of boredom
- Increase in academic challenge
- Prevention of mental laziness
- Placement with mental peers and positive role models
- Pursuit of individual interests and abilities
- Increase in motivation, satisfaction, and self-confidence
- Allowance for earlier completion of academic requirements
- Promotion of better attitudes toward school

DISADVANTAGES OF ACCELERATION

- Fear of social rejection and separation from age group
- Allowing skill or curricular gaps to go unchecked
- Increase in pressure to "grow up more quickly"
- Isolation due to individualized approaches
- Discrepancies in physical, social and emotional development
- Difficulty with scheduling or logistical problems
- Topping out of curriculum

The diagnosis of any skill gap areas and subsequent completion of instruction are essential. Generally, students with outstanding abilities in abstract thinking and higher level reasoning and conceptualization need specialized, rapid instruction in mechanical or computational areas prior to acceleration. This includes skills such as handwriting (frequently cursive writing is a pitfall) or long division, where inability to perform mechanical operations can cause a slowing of expected progress.

The other criterion most frequently cited (by a group of parents of highly gifted students in the Denver metro area) as a key to successful acceleration is the **receiving teacher**. If the teacher *is in favor of acceleration, is able to be flexible, can provide an individualized curriculum to fill in skill gap areas, can further accelerate curriculum when appropriate, and is willing to monitor the social-emotional adjustment of the student,* then gifted students are apt to flourish in his or her presence.

All too often one of two things may happen. If the teachers is not competent or confident, her insecurity may result in the child's making an unsuccessful adjustment. In some cases, teachers may put increased pressure and attention on the accelerated student to perform, based on the superior reputation the child had earned previously. *Somewhat lowered expectations must be acceptable, at least during a period of adjustment to the new setting.* Students who are good candidates for acceleration are most frequently gifted, high achievers. The need to further challenge these students becomes apparent, but helping deal with their vulnerabilities toward perfectionism and performance is also essential. On the other hand, sometimes students have developed poor study and performance habits. The opportunity to be challenged will often make the difference in motivating a low achieving, gifted student. Caution should be used with this strategy, however, as low perforemotional problem that might be exacerbated by adding more pressure to the academic environment. An interesting illustration was a Rocky Mountain Talent Search student who entered the Summer Institute at the University of Denver based upon SAT scores taken when in junior high school. She performed at the top of her classes in Creative Writing and Sociology, both taught at the college level. Her grade point average at her home junior high school, however, was somewhere between a D and an F. She struggled to overcome poor study habits while at the university, but motivation to succeed with gifted peers and challenging curriculum was overwhelming. She was at risk for dropping out of her home school without some dramatic changes being made.

Motivation plays a key role in the decision to be accelerated. A high school student completed his application to the Early Experience Program (EEP) for concurrent enrollment at the University of Denver with the following statement about his desire to take a college course during his senior year:

> "...I had no desire to put my education in abeyance for an entire year before college... Too, I hope that my participation in the EEP will make my transition to college easier. I have often heard stories of miserable freshman years, and they all seem to be due to rough transitions, not inhospitable schools. Perhaps one college course in advance might act as a vaccination for the coming four years."

Perhaps one of the most all around gifted students known to the Rocky Mountain Talent Search was Allison. Allison skipped 8th and 11th grades and graduated with all A's. Artistically, musically, linguistically, mathematically and personally talented, she had her choice of several top universities at age 16. Her SAT scores were V = 720, M = 760 and TSWE = 60 + in her senior year. Reflecting back on her acceleration experiences, Allison wrote:

> Academically, I would have been terribly bored if I had not accelerated! Acceleration isn't for everyone. It can be frustrating. Academic maturity isn't enough. A student must accelerate because she wants to, not because her parents or teachers want her to – otherwise it would be a disaster. She must be able to adjust to new people, new situations, new beliefs. She must be mature in every way.

It is for students like Allison and Kurt that we must consider wise and thoughtful decisions regarding acceleration. This is a strategy which requires careful screening and diagnosis, support systems, and supportive educators. ■

REFERENCES

Brody, L. & Benbow, C. (1987). Accelerative strategies: How effective are they for the gifted? *Gifted Child Quarterly, 31*, 105-110.

Elkind, D. (1986). Point-Counterpoint: Mental acceleration. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 11*, (4), 19-31.

Kulik, J. & Kulik, C. (1984). Synthesis of research on effects of accelerated instruction. *Educational Leadership, 42*, 84-89.

Robinson, H. (1983). A case for radical acceleration. Programs of the Johns Hopkins University and the University of Washington. In C. P. Benbow & J. Stanley (Eds.), *Academic promise: Aspects of development*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Sisk, D. (1988). Point-Counterpoint: The bored and disinterested gifted child: Going through school lockstep. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 11*, (4), 5-18.

Van Tassel-Baska, J. (1981, April). The case for acceleration. Presented to CEC-TAG Topical Conference on the Gifted and Talented, Orlando, Florida.

Holly M. Hultgren is principal at Nederland Elementary School, Boulder, CO and adjunct professor at the University of Denver.

WHO SHOULD BE ACCELERATED?

- **Students at the top of the class in performance, at the 99th percentile on test scores, or several grade levels beyond curriculum being presented**
- **Students bored with the content of curriculum because they 'learned it long ago'**
- **Students willing to work harder and faster in order to be challenged and stimulated**
- **Students who are physically, emotionally and socially capable of working with older students**
- **Students impatient with the rigidity of a lock step curriculum**

WHEN SHOULD STUDENTS BE ACCELERATED?

- **Before school begins in kindergarten**
- **At transition points when moving between schools or districts**
- **Between elementary and secondary schools**
- **At semester breaks**
- **When other students will be making the same move and adjustment**
- **When conditions in a regular classroom setting become intolerable**

QUOTES FROM TALENT SEARCH STUDENTS ABOUT ACCELERATION

"Kids shouldn't have to wait to learn."
"I hated being held back."
"I like the accelerated program, I had an excellent teacher and I learned a lot."
"Why go down when you can go up?

Linda Kreger Silverman

PERSONALITY PLUS

Perfectionism

We are all familiar with the *perils* of perfectionism, but few of us are aware of its *joys*. If you have been searching all of your life for permission to be perfectionistic, this column is for you.

Perfectionism is often maligned. It is perceived as a personality flaw, a psychoneurotic tendency, a symptom of maladjustment, a bad habit, or an undesirable characteristic that should be firmly rooted out of one's makeup. Parents are almost inevitably blamed as the cause of the "problem." Cures include setting more realistic expectations and using self-talk to convince yourself that you don't have to be perfect.

The problem, however, may be in our attitudes toward perfectionism, rather than in the characteristic itself. We laud Michelangelo for his search for perfection and Marie Curie for hers. We are proud of the achievement of our Nobel Laureates, our Olympic Champions, our world class scholars and artists. All of these individuals spend endless hours perfecting their knowledge, working harder than their colleagues, never satisfied with less than their best, pushing themselves beyond their own limitations. They command our profound respect and admiration. Why, then, do we denigrate this quality in gifted children or in ourselves?

The root of excellence is perfectionism. It is the driving force in the personality that propels the individual toward higher and higher goals. There is a strong correlation between perfectionism and giftedness (Silverman, 1983). I have yet to meet a gifted person who wasn't perfectionistic in some way. Even underachievers, who refuse to do their work or turn in sloppy work, often behave the way they do because they can't meet their own high standards (Whitmore, 1980). So they give up in frustration. But asking them to lower their standards and self-expectations is not the solution. It is more appropriate to build their self-confidence so that they are motivated to work toward their ideals.

In underachievers we see how perfectionism can be debilitating. In Olympic Champions, we see how it can lead to greatness. The characteristic itself is neither good nor bad, it just is — and it is part of the gifted person's life equipment.

If you harness your perfectionism to work for you rather than letting it control you, you can change the world. ■

REFERENCES

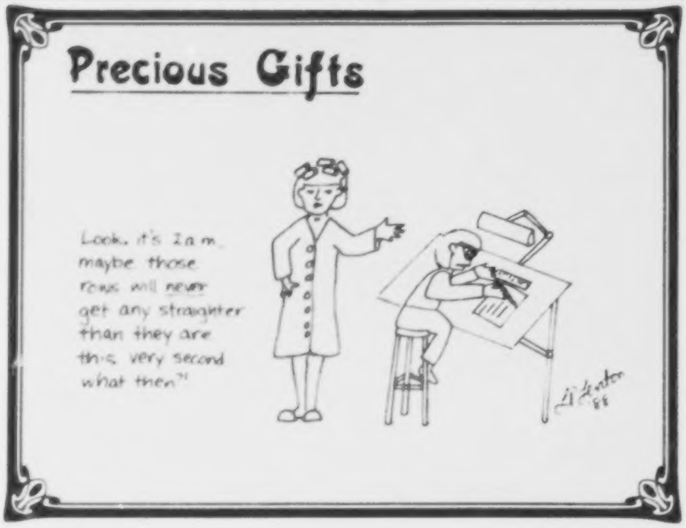
Silverman, L. K. (1983). Personality development: The pursuit of excellence. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, *6* (1), 5-19.

Whitmore, J. (1980). *Giftedness, conflict and underachievement*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Linda Silverman, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist and Director of the Gifted Child Development Center in Denver, Colorado.

A Few Hints to Help You and Your Children Cope with Perfectionism

- Appreciate the trait. Don't be ashamed of being perfectionistic.
- Understand that it serves a useful purpose.
- Set priorities for yourself. Allow yourself to be perfectionistic in activities that really matter to you, rather than in everything all at once.
- Maintain high standards for yourself, but don't impose them on others lest you become a tyrant.
- Keep striving even when your first attempts are unsuccessful.
- Don't quit when the going gets rough. Only allow yourself to quit when you're a winner.
- Don't punish yourself for failing. Focus your energies on future successes.
- Hold onto your ideals and believe in your ability to reach them.



Precious Gifts
Look, it's 1 a.m. maybe those rows will never get any straighter than they are this very second what then?"

HOMESCHOOLING Continued from page 1

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Pearl Buck, John Stuart Mill, and Laura Ingalls Wilder? All are gifted people who were educated partially or totally at home instead of in a traditional school setting.

Today, homeschooling is one of the fastest-growing education movements in the United States. It is estimated that anywhere from 100,000 to almost a million American schoolchildren this year will receive their education in their own homes and in the larger community instead of in a traditional school. (Because states have differing laws regarding home instruction, and because many families – sometimes in violation of law – choose not to register their homeschools, an accurate count of the actual numbers of homeschooled children is difficult to make.) But there is no doubt that the practice is growing. In the small state of Maine, for instance, the number of approved home instruction programs had grown from three in 1981 to more than five hundred today.

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Home education has a long and respected history in this country, and commands a special place in the history of the education of gifted people. It is only in relatively recent history that the ten-month school year, compulsory attendance laws, and large graded schools have become the norm; before the middle of this century, many children received their education in one-room rural schoolhouses in neighborhoods where only a few families made up the total school population, and the school years lasted for two twelve-week terms. During the rest of the year, formal and informal home tutoring took place. The advantages of such educational settings, including self-paced, individualized instruction; time to pursue major interests; close family and community ties; and the support of traditional family values within the educational setting, are all major influences on families who choose home education for their children today. Some of our present teaching strategies for gifted children are also found in the basic elements of good homeschooling, including individualized instruction, tutorials, mentorships, participation in real-world problems and issues, and opportunities for both acceleration and enrichment.

Some gifted individuals of the past were educated completely at home until their college years, while many others experienced home tutoring for a part of their schooling. [More recently, Feldman (1986) provided insight into the home tutoring programs of two child prodigies.] Thomas Edison's mother removed him from school and taught him herself after the teacher said he was "addled". Leta Hollingworth (1942), a pioneer in the study of extremely gifted children, described the home tutoring experiences of two children above 180 IQ, "Child D" and "Child E":

> The child was not placed in school at the usual age because he did not fit into the school organization. At the time he should have entered kindergarten D could read fluently and could perform complicated arithmetical processes. His intellectual interests were far beyond those of even the highly selected children of a private kindergarten. Therefore, his parents kept him out of school and obtained the companionship of other children for him by sending him to a playground (p. 120).

E went to kindergarten from the age of 3 years to the age of 5 years. From 5 to 6 he was out of school on account of school organization (he could not be accepted in the first grade) (p. 139).

By the age of eight, E's mother stated:

> ...that under private tutors E had at this time covered the work of the seventh and nearly of the work of the eighth grade... In addition to his regular school work E, by the time he was 8 years old, had covered the following special work in language and mathematics, either with a tutor or with his mother" (Hollingworth, 1942, p. 139).

A long list of academic accomplishments follows, including work in nine modern and ancient languages, algebra, astronomy, and history (p. 139).

Lewis Terman, sometimes considered the "father" of gifted education because of his famous longitudinal study of a thousand gifted children, homeschooled his own son, Fred, for a short time.

> Fred did not learn to read until he was eight years of age. As a child, Fred had many interests and was less dependent than the average boy on the companionship of other children. As a result, his parents did not bother to start him in school at the usual age of six. Shortly after his eighth birthday, however, they decided that Fred should learn to read; so his mother, who had been a teacher, spent half an hour or so each day during the following winter giving him lessons in reading and arithmetic. The following fall – 1909 – Fred started school in the third grade, one year behind his age group. He had no difficulty in adjusting. Four years later, at thirteen, he graduated from the eighth grade; in seven more years, he graduated from Stanford Phi Beta Kappa (Seagoe, 1975, p. 37).

HOMESCHOOLING PROCESS

Today, many of the country's most gifted children are being educated at home, by their families and by tutors and mentors in the community. Why do modern families of the gifted choose homeschooling for their children? How do I know if homeschooling is right for my child? If I decide to homeschool, how do I begin? How do I develop an appropriate curriculum for a child of extraordinary ability? What about social development? These are the questions most commonly asked about homeschooling gifted children.

Why do families choose homeschooling as an option for their gifted children?

Many gifted children are homeschooled because public or private school did not work out for them, or because the special needs of the child cannot be adequately met in a regular school setting. When a school is not able to provide an appropriate educational program for a child of extraordinary talent, or the child has not responded well to the school program, homeschooling can provide a welcome option. Tutorials, accelerated coursework, special projects, and specific attention to the child's learning style are often the benefits. For children highly talented in the arts, a flexible home education schedule offers them the crucial gift of time to develop this talent – the time to practice ballet or the violin five or more hours a day, if they desire, and still obtain a high quality academic education. Andrew Wyeth, one the greatest American artists of the twentieth century, left school after the third grade. He was tutored at home in the academic subjects, given a great deal of time to draw and to paint and to think, and during his early teens apprenticed in his father's studio. There he learned the techniques, the craftsmanship, and the dedication necessary to become a great artist.

Still other families simply live too far from a school to attend regularly, or may be migrant families or families who travel extensively. Laura Ingalls Wilder, the young pioneer girl who preserved for future generations the adventure and excitement of the western expansion in her Little House series of children's books, was educated at home by her mother during times when the family was not located near a school. Her mother's schoolbooks, lovingly and carefully carried in a wagon train across Dakota Territory, were a prized possession, for they meant that no matter how wild the Territory or how far the family lived from the nearest neighbor, culture and civilization and literacy would be available to Laura and her sisters. A hundred years later, some families still live too far from a school to participate regularly. The state of Alaska, for instance, offers such families a state-sponsored home education program complete with textbooks, advisory teachers, curriculum differentiation, and guidance and library services. This service has been recognized as a model program, and is available for replication through the National Diffusion Network (Madden, 1986).

Homeschooling is also often chosen for religious reasons. In a day and age of vast social change, families with traditional religious beliefs and a desire to rear their children in the faith of their choice may not be willing to share child-rearing with an institution, public or private, that does not support their faith. Families of the gifted are no exception to this phenomenon; indeed, the early ethical and moral development and increased emotional sensitivity typical of gifted children often provide these families with a double incentive to create an education environment that supports the child's growing ethical awareness and the family's religious development.

Finally, families may choose homeschooling because it is what they have always wanted to do. Usually such families are very close, "bonded" families; in many cases, the children may have been born at home. From infancy, such families have delighted in being with and teaching their children. Homeschooling, for these families, evolves out of what it means to be part of that family. Home education is simply a continuation of what the family has been doing all along.

How do I know if homeschooling is right for our family?

Making the decision to teach your own child at home is never easy, and usually requires a great deal of personal soul-searching. Although homeschooling is becoming more and more common, in some areas of the country it is still not well-accepted as an option within the educational community, and families may initially feel a sense of isolation and disapproval from the school, neighbors, and sometimes extended family. It is essential, therefore, that the decision be carefully thought out, and that the family share a commitment to that decision. Since homeschooling requires intensive attention to family life and the entire family system to work well, it is especially important in intact families that husband and wife agree on the decision. At a younger age than most children, gifted children also need to be involved in the decisions affecting their education. Julian Stanley's observations about the value of acceleration for students who are "eager" to move ahead (Stanley, 1978) might also be applied to the decision to homeschool. Gifted children should be eager to try the homeschooling experience if it is to be successful.

How do I begin?

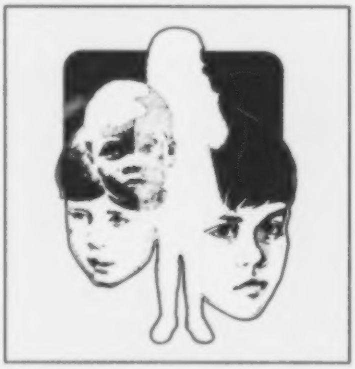
Most families initially find it beneficial to contact other local homeschooling families or their state homeschooling association. These contacts are usually the best source of information about the specific steps necessary to begin homeschooling. A number of homeschooling support groups exist in every state, where parents can

(Continued on page 15)

Kathi Kearney

THE HIGHLY GIFTED

School Placement (Part II)



School placement and educational decision making for highly gifted children remain the most challenging tasks parents and schools face as these children develop. In the last issue, we focused on three important areas to consider as educators and parents make decisions regarding school placement for the highly gifted. These included: **obtaining an accurate assessment of the child's abilities; making educational decisions within the context of the child's total development;** and being **flexible.**

This month's column focuses on three additional recommendations to assist parents and teachers as they develop appropriate school placement options for highly gifted children.

Don't be afraid to attempt a major educational intervention if it is warranted.

> *Linda needed the academic challenge that college coursework provided, yet she was only twelve years old. After exploring a variety of options, Linda's parents worked out an arrangement with the local school: Linda would take her core academic courses at the community college, but participate in arts, physical education, extracurricular, and social activities at the junior high.*

Most schools and parents have little experience with grade skipping, early college entrance, radical acceleration of two or more years, or homeschooling. Yet there are times when such interventions may be the most appropriate educational decision. When it is, have the courage to try it. And remember, no decision is irreversible – if it doesn't work out, another avenue can always be explored.

Expect to make mid-course corrections.

> *An ambitious program of enrichment and acceleration was established for seven-year-old Rory. But after an exciting and enthusiastic first semester, Rory complained bitterly after the Christmas holidays that he hated school. His special classes, which were so much fun in September and October, now seemed like "baby work," and he did not want to finish his projects.*

What happens when an appropriate educational program is designed, the child has participated productively and happily for several months – and then, all of a sudden, the program isn't right anymore? This is a common problem with highly gifted children, and a potentially embarrassing one for the parents, who may have worked very hard with the local school to develop this program for their child. It is also almost always a frustrating problem for teachers and gifted education coordinators, who may already have stretched their own energy and school resources to the limit. It is important for everyone to remember that the highly gifted child may have "gotten beyond" the program of curriculum before his parents or teachers were ready for him to be finished with it! At this point, a "mid-course correction" is indeed in order, and parents and teachers should meet to discuss other ways of adapting the school program.

Listen to the child, and involve him or her in making educational decisions.

These children often have a clearly defined sense of what they need and when they need it. It is important, at an early age, for them to feel they have a sense of control and ownership in the educational decisions that affect their lives on a daily basis. By listening to them and finding ways to incorporate their ideas, we affirm their self-esteem and their growing understanding of their own giftedness; we also teach them educational survival strategies that will be important to them in the high school years and beyond.

Educational planning for highly gifted children is a unique challenge. In many cases, neither schools nor parents have had previous experience dealing with the major issues arising as a result of the unfolding development of the extremely gifted child. This is truly a pioneering venture, and those parents and educators who diligently work to make learning the adventure that it should be for these children are to be commended. ■

Kathi Kearney is Director of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in Auburn, Maine, a resource teacher, and editor of *Highly Gifted Children.*

discuss such issues as curriculum development, management of the homeschool, and resource identification. Many of these local groups also offer weekly activities for children, including special classes, field trips, and tutorials.

Families should also research local and state laws, rules, and regulations regarding homeschooling. Unlike families of the past, in most states those who wish to teach their own children at home today must face a tangle of state laws and local policies that were nonexistent in Laura Ingalls' Dakota Territory or Andrew Wyeth's Brandywine Valley. These laws and policies vary widely from state to state and school to school. In some states, families only need to file a registration form; in other states, the requirements may be much more stringent.

How do I develop an appropriate homeschooling curriculum for a gifted child?

Developing appropriate curriculum for gifted children in a homeschool is similar in many ways to curriculum differentiation in the regular or gifted education classroom: the child's interests, skills, and abilities should be assessed, and a program developed that provides the optimal match of appropriate content and skills to the child's ongoing cognitive and social/emotional growth. In regular school settings, such programming is almost always limited in scope somewhat by the limitations inherent in large organizations: scheduling, personnel, budgetary concerns, and school policies.

But curriculum development for the gifted child in the homeschool *differs* in some ways as well. For many gifted children, homeschooling provides the first opportunity they have ever had in their lives to participate in a curriculum fully matched to their needs. There is no more waiting for the rest of the class to catch up. The child does not have to stop working on an important project when the bell rings. Convincing the school to consider acceleration is not an issue; if a fifth-grade child is ready and able to learn algebra, she can do so. Early college entrance can be incorporated into the educational program easily. Time can be provided for mentors, tutors, and the wide and unrestricted use of community resources, in a way that is just not possible in most public or private schools.

This kind of educational freedom requires families to access and evaluate existing resources; select curriculum materials and textbooks carefully; design a program based on the child's individual needs; manage the program well; and be prepared for the fact that a gifted child may progress very rapidly through even the most well-designed curriculum!

> ***For many gifted children, homeschooling provides the first opportunity they have ever had in their lives to participate in a curriculum fully matched to their needs.***

Families can purchase curriculum materials from many regular publishers, and should also know that curricula especially designed for homeschools is available in the small but growing homeschool market. But most families of gifted children find they still need to adapt these materials for use with gifted students. The other alternative is for a family to design a curriculum especially for their child, which may or may not use traditional textbooks and curriculum materials. In all but a handful of states this is permitted. Other homeschooling families, teachers of the gifted, and some college professors are often willing to help with curriculum development. A nationwide directory of professionals willing to help homeschoolers is published annually by *Growing Without Schooling*, a national homeschooling newsletter founded by the late John Holt.

What about social development?

This is one of the most common concerns expressed by those who are not familiar with home education. In fact, many homeschooled children are more socially adept than their peers in regular schools, because their homeschool programs involve social experiences with people of all ages as well as chronological-age peers. Most families do this as a natural outgrowth of curriculum activities, as well as involving children in a wide variety of community experiences with age-peers, such as Scouts, 4-H, Sunday School, ballet classes, and sports activities. If the child has had difficult social experiences in a regular school due to a lack of intellectual peers and an inappropriate school program, participation in a home education program instead may actually improve social skills as the child's self-esteem increases.

Most children in homeschooling programs adjust well to re-entry in a regular school program when the time comes. For gifted children, one additional issue involving social development and re-entry is the issue of acceleration. Families need to carefully document any acceleration that has taken place, either in particular subjects or as the result of a homeschool grade skip or "doubling up" by completing two grades in one year. Grade placement upon reentering a regular school should be determined by assessing the child's development in all areas at the time the re-entry takes place, and appropriate provision made so that the child does not repeat work he has already mastered.

For some gifted children, homeschooling may make the crucial difference in whether or not they develop their potential fully. Bloom (1985) *(Continued on page 16)*

HOMESCHOOLING Continued from page 15

describes extensive parent involvement in the child's education and the use of the tutorial method, at least in the talent area, as being essential to the development of very high range potential in many fields. Kirk (1972) describes home tutoring as a viable option for highly gifted children:

> "...Many of our most outstanding men of history have not had to face the problem of adjusting to average children in school because they were tutored at home. Some of Hollingworth's subjects were also tutored. There are other cases of successful individuals who received tutoring during their earlier years either in conjunction with formalized schooling or without it until there were ready for high school or the university... It may be that for the extremely gifted child tutoring is essential unless there is available a class of high-level gifted children with whom he can have enough in common to stimulate his social, emotional, and educational development. Another possibility is half-day placement in school for physical education, art, and some aspects of school life, and tutoring at home for the rest of the day in academic pursuits" (p. 134).

Finally, families of gifted children who choose to homeschool, and the relatives, friends, tutors, and professionals who help them, should remember that homeschooling is a unique adventure. At a time when more and more families are not able to spend much time with their children, we need to applaud and assist those families who find both the strength and the time to be their children's primary teachers. It is never entirely easy, but for most homeschooling families, the rewards are great. ■

REFERENCES

Bloom, B. S. (Ed.). (1985). *Developing talent in young people*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Feldman, D. H. (1986). *Nature's gambit: Child prodigies and the development of human potential*. New York: Basic Books.

Hollingworth, L. S. (1942). *Children above 180 IQ*. Yonkers-on-Hudson, N.Y.: World Book Company.

Kirk, S. (1972). *Educating exceptional children*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Seagoe, M. V. (1975). *Terman and the gifted*. Los Altos, CA: William Kaufman.

Stanley, J. (1978). Educational non-acceleration: An international tragedy. *G/C/T, 1(3)*, 2-5, 53-57, 60-63.

Kathi Kearney is Director of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in Auburn, Maine, a resource teacher, and editor of *Highly Gifted Children*.

HOMESCHOOLING RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES OF GIFTED CHILDREN

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

BETTER THAN SCHOOL, Nancy Wallace. Larson Publications, Burdett, NY. Wallace's unique volume describes a year in the life of their family's homeschool. Her two children, Vita and Ishmael, are extremely gifted, intellectually and musically. Much of what she has to say is relevant not only to understanding the homeschooling movement and what life is really like, day-to-day, in a homeschool, but also as an example of educational development in the profoundly gifted child.

NATURE'S GAMBIT; CHILD PRODIGIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN POTENTIAL, David Henry Feldman. 1986, Basic Books, NY. This book describes the development of six child prodigies (all boys). Two of the boys were educated partially or totally at home. A description of their educational programs is included.

HOME EDUCATION & CONSTITUTIONAL LIBERTIES, John Whitehead, 1984, The Rutherford Institute; Crossway Books, Westchester, IL. This basic book about the legal and constitutional aspects of homeschooling discusses, in readable style, the rights of parents, compulsory school attendance laws, and the extent of states' compelling interests in education.

THE BIG BOOK OF HOME LEARNING, Mary Pride. This resource guide contains descriptions and evaluations of secular and Christian materials and curricula for home schools. Written in an entertaining style; Christian emphasis.

HOME SCHOOL STATUTE CHART OF THE 50 STATES, Home School Legal Defense Association, 731 Walker Road, Suite E-2, Great Falls, VA 22066. Analysis of the home school laws and regulations in each state. Includes information about compulsory attendance laws, required subjects, homeschooling statutes, and regulations.

GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING, 729 Boylston Street, Boston, Massachusetts, 02116. $15/year. Educational critic John Holt began this newsletter as a network for homeschooling families to share their experiences and resources with each other, as well as a central clearinghouse of current information about the educational and legal aspects of home education in the United States and abroad. It remains one of the most informative publications in the field.

THE PARENT EDUCATOR AND FAMILY REPORT, Hewitt Research Foundation, P. O. Box 9, Washougal, WA. Free; donations requested to cover printing and mailing costs. This newsletter contains a bimonthly update of homeschooling news nationwide; research; and information on legal and legislative issues related to homeschooling. Christian emphasis.

(Continued on page 20)

written for parents of moderately gifted may not be at all helpful. Special needs will bring special demands on time, money, energy, and creative problem-solving skills. Parents usually fear that they will not be able to meet whatever the special needs turn out to be, that their resources may not be adequate to the demands, as indeed they may not. The common human reactions that parents of handicapped children experience – "Why me?" and "I wish things could be easier" – are also experienced by parents of highly gifted children.

All these reactions to test results may appear and reappear, not necessarily in this sequence, of course, and even over many years. Also, each parent is on his/her own odyssey of understanding; at times father and mother will not be in agreement with each other about the meaning of the test results for the child, themselves, or the family. When choices need to be made and priorities set, conflicts may erupt.

Thus the first crisis parents experience is that of reacting to test results, but it is a crisis that has no clear end point and reverberates as years go by and awareness deepens. The next critical issue for parents will also be difficult and long-term.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT SCHOOL

The question that brought the family to the psychologist's office has not been magically answered by receipt of the report. Decisions about schooling will need to be made each year; often, adaptations of program or even changes of school must be made during a particular year. The hope that parents will be able to search out the perfect school and enroll the child, the wish that the parents will be able to solve the schooling problem by one well considered decision – these are fantasies. The realities, parents discover, are quite different. Parents must deal with teachers (even in some reputedly excellent schools) who have never knowingly met, much less taught, such a child, who are afraid and perhaps feel that their professional competence is threatened. They must deal with principals who doubt the test results, who dislike the word "gifted," who are reluctant to make special accommodations for special needs at this end of the scale, and who if encouraged by law or policy to make appropriate accommodations, do so with such bad grace that the child suffers pretended acceptance, but actual rejection.

Considering that it is their own child who is suffering educational abuse or neglect – about which they have understandably strong feelings – it seems poignant that to effect any changes young parents must regularly rein in their outrage and undertake, with utmost tact and political finesse, to educate the educators. Parents of these children, like their offspring, are often aware of several simultaneous realities. They know that at school as they are negotiating with a principal or trying to establish a trusting and cooperative relationship with a teacher, some faculty in the staff lounge are complaining to each other, "Too much has already been done for Bobby," "He needs to just be a regular third-grader," and "The Smiths expect a special program, but we have other children to worry about."

Silverman (1986) reports that a greater proportion of highly gifted children than their less gifted peers are introverts. Whereas an extravert derives energy from contact with other people, an introvert's energy source is within (Jung, 1938). Studies are now being done to test the hypothesis that parents of highly gifted children, like their offspring, are more likely than others to be introverts. Observations of this author are that although many parents of highly gifted children have developed effective social skills, many find social interactions stressful. Many, likely themselves to be gifted or highly gifted, prefer to work on individual research, independent creative projects, or solitary enterprises. They have chosen such careers and hobbies in preference to dealing with others less intellectually able than they and over the years may have perpetuated their reluctance to deal with people who may seem to them more foreign than citizens of another country. As Hollingworth (1942) wrote, *"The more intelligent a person is regardless of age, the less often can he find a truly congenial companion"* (p. 263).

What is it like for such adults to negotiate and even advocate assertively for their child with teachers, principals, school boards? Even if they apparently perform well, to do so can be anxiety-provoking, taxing, and exhausting. They may find it rewarding in that they know their struggles are evidence to the child of their loving loyalty, and gratification can be derived even from slow progress in achieving real changes. Still, the cost for some parents is high. Tired and demoralized adults cannot share the zest for life that they might otherwise; such parents can do more for their children if they are receiving encouragement from friends, relatives, or a special support group where they can be themselves.

LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY

In addition to struggles around decision making about school, parents face a general lack of understanding and support for highly gifted children in the community. This, of course, contributes to the lack of special educational programs for such children. Surviving in and dealing with the community presents yet another chronic critical issue for parents.

Again and again over the years one must respond graciously to praise for the charm *(Continued on page 20)*

Felice Kaufmann

HOMESTRETCH

There's a tried and true technique called brainstorming that for many years has been a mainstay of programs for gifted students. While introduced in the 1950's by Alex Osborn as a method of group problem-solving for adults, brainstorming can also be taught to young children as a game – one that is not only fun but educational and enriching as well.

The purpose of brainstorming with young children is to encourage them to be deliberately creative so they learn that they can willfully generate good ideas - for rainy day projects, names for pets, suggestions for birthday presents or solutions to a problem on the playground. Certain rules must be followed, however, for this process to be effective. For young children (there are additional rules for older students and adults) these are:

1. ***"Don't criticize."***
   This means not making negative comments or gestures about *anyone's* ideas.
2. ***"Try to think of a lot of ideas."***
   The more ideas there are, the more there are to choose from.
3. ***"Be silly."***
   Sometimes the silliest idea turns out to be your best.

While young children are naturally good at brainstorming, they still need certain kinds of adult assistance. It is crucial that you take the time to do this so your child will experience success and want to brainstorm often.

FIRST, ***record all your child's ideas,*** preferably using crayons and an easel or flipchart. Even if your child is not yet a reader, she will be excited and proud to see her ideas in print. If the ideas are numbered, you will also reinforce her counting skills!

SECOND, ***coach your child,*** especially the first few times you brainstorm. Ask lots of open-ended questions that will lead him to think of more and better ideas – "What else can you think of?" "Is there anything you might change?" "What if...?"

THIRD, ***actively participate in the process*** by contributing your own ideas. There is no better way of teaching positive attitudes toward brainstorming than to model the technique yourself.

FOURTH, ***help your child put her ideas to use,*** so she can see the actual results of her efforts. This will be even a stronger boost to her self-esteem than receiving praise.

The best time to brainstorm is... any chance you get! ! ! While on a long car trip, think of possible uses for a common object such as a paper cup, pencil or shoe. Waiting for the pediatrician, figure out ways to modify a teddy bear so it would be more fun to play with. Walking to the playground, see how many different motions you can make with your hands or how many different ways you could show you are happy. Or looking out the window, imagine all the things that would happen if animals could talk.

If you and your child only produce a few ideas at a time, don't give up! Go back to your list over and over again, adding new ideas each time. The more you practice brainstorming, the better you get at it! Begin now by brainstorming answers to the following question: "In what ways might I use brainstorming today – for myself or with my child? Let's see. . . . ." ■

Felice Kaufmann, Ph.D., is a consultant on the gifted from Lexington, Kentucky who has studied the Presidential Scholars. She is also a Visiting Professor at the University of Kentucky.

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

There's still time to order while supplies last!

☐ **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS**

☐ **EARLY DEVELOPMENT**

Send $6.50 per issue (prepaid) to: Snowpeak Publishing, Inc.
P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122 or call (303) 798-0986.

☐VISA ☐MASTERCARD NAME____________________
Card # ____________ ADDRESS____________________
Expiration Date____________
____________ CITY__________ STATE______ ZIP______
Signature

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY

Creative
Voyager

Creative Ventures And Encounters

Jerry Flack
Tour Guide

BACKPACKING

On this voyage, we are going to concentrate on the packing rather than the traveling...the backpacking, to be specific.

Take the boring, no-work monkey off the backs of gifted kids and substitute creativity backpacks. What are creativity backpacks? They are portable learning and enrichment centers, packaged in backpacks or book bags, which gifted students take home from school overnight and on weekends. These backpacks may be created by teachers, parent volunteers, media specialists, or even by older gifted students for the use of younger creative students.

Begin by selecting a subject. You might create a Thomas Edison backpack, a dinosaur backpack, or still another one about biking through Ireland. Since we talk about journeys in this column, let us travel far to the north for our example: polar bears. Be resourceful in finding material. Nature magazines may be surveyed for articles about polar bears that can be cut and laminated for the backpack. Librarians and media specialists can help you locate books about polar bears at almost any reading level. The local zoo may also supply free or inexpensive printed material about the habitat, diet, and behavior of polar bears. Creative packers will no doubt think of many other resource leads to follow.

Once the materials for the backpack have been assembled, your own creativity gets a workout. Begin creating challenging and interesting learning adventures for gifted students. Of course, you can begin with fact and interpretive questions about the readings you have placed in the polar bear backpack, but do not stop there. Can you think of some science experiments for a gifted child to do at home which are related to something known about polar bears? Did you know, for instance, that scientists are studying the polar bear to discover ways to replicate the remarkable (95%) solar efficiency of the bear's shaggy fur? Be sure to challenge the imagination of youngsters, too. One assignment included in the backpack might instruct users to maintain a journal a polar bear observer might keep. Younger children will be delighted to be confronted with creative conundrums, too, such as this: Think of at least 10 different ways to entertain a polar bear who shows up, uninvited, at your birthday party.

Whenever possible, try to create at least one activity that will allow students to involve their families in the learning pleasure and fun. Ask the children, for example, to create a polar bear trivia game, based on their readings, which the whole family can play at dinner time.

I have been suggesting the idea of creativity or learning backpacks in my region of the country for several years and I have made at least two interesting observations. First, the parents and teachers who develop creativity backpacks have as much fun packaging them as the students do using them. Second, the backpacks have a way of helping teachers turn on underachieving and/or undiscovered gifted students to the excitement of learning.

Sometimes planning for the trip can be more fun than the journey itself. Try creating a polar bear backpack for your gifted students and you will know what I mean. ■

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Gifted Education at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs and editor of *G/T News*.

SURVIVING THE BLESSING Continued from page 17

and accomplishments of one's child, and of course, one is proud of the four-year old who plays the piano with real musicality and the seven-year old who publishes a neighborhood summer newspaper. At the same time, one feels that one understands the feelings behind mythologies in societies that believe in the ominousness of praising a child – that even believe in the evil eye or in covering a baby's face so that envious elves will not kidnap it. Behind all this is the parent's fear that the blessings, the gifts, or the special child himself may be taken away. For these parents, this is a fear supported by the myth "early ripe, early rot," so nicely dispelled by Hollingworth's (1942) longitudinal studies, a fear supported by the all too well known tragedy of William Sidis, the promise of whose early graduation from Harvard was never fulfilled (although other early college graduates have almost always succeeded in their careers and private lives).

One is aware, too, that non-elven neighbors, other human parents, may be truly jealous and thus unwelcoming of one's highly gifted child. Multiplied hundred- and thousand-fold, this jealous wish to reject translates into community abandonment of these children with their needs for special help. The cry "But all children are special!" – as indeed they are – can cover a refusal or inability to look at, understand, and meet the particular needs of children whose development is advanced beyond that of their age-mates. *It is important, but not at all easy, for parents of highly gifted children to try to present to the community a balanced posture: one must convey a democratic respect for the worth and needs of every other child at the same time that one advocates persistently for the needs of one's own particular child.*

Mothers and fathers of these children must face other critical issues, such as how to foster the general socialization of their children, how to deal with siblings, how to find enough energy for the more-frequent trips to the library and enough money for extra classes, perhaps private school, and college expenses earlier than anticipated. Are there any redeeming qualities to help them cope?

GIFTS FOR SURVIVAL

Fortunately, yes. First, parents of highly gifted children, like their young, seem to have a ready sense of humor. Quick to see the ridiculous or ironic in others and in themselves, they may retain a sense of humor even when they are discouraged and this may contribute to outsiders' not seeing the real pain, struggles and needs. Nevertheless, the laughter in their support group seems far more frequent than in many parent groups. It seems a sign of health and hope.

Most of these parents also show some of the intellectual capacities of their children. The ability to analyze a situation does give them a way to rise above anger and to feel a form of power. As one parent said, "It is my secret weapon."

Perhaps the greatest gift any parent can give a child is compassionate respect.

Like their children, too, many parents of highly gifted children are creative and enjoy their playful inventiveness. This quality provides not only a way to help solve problems, but also to relieve stress. One temporarily unemployed father gave his four-year old for his birthday a broken vacuum cleaner found in a neighbor's trash can and repaired it with him. Such a birthday present represents a truly creative and personal solution, not to mention a gift of time itself.

Highly gifted children may show an earlier than normal awareness of time and of their place in it. Several of Hollingworth's subjects very early developed a sense of mission, which they followed through to fulfillment. Several children whom Delisle (1984) quotes in response to his question, "What are your future plans?" answered with an unusually sophisticated awareness that their adult lives would have several phases (pp. 105-106). Adults, too, can use a sophisticated awareness of time and of their own place in time to manage temporary anguish and even tragedy: a perfect example of this is the work of the brilliant English theoretical physicist, Stephen Hawking (1988), who, though paralyzed and dying, has just given the world *A Brief History of Time*. Parents of highly gifted children especially need to keep their eyes on the long-term goals and larger realities. That most of them so often do bodes well for their emotional and spiritual health and that of those in their families.

All this struggle in the community and in schools, invisible though it may be to the outside world, can be extremely painful. And yet a parent who can rise to the challenge, to fight his own dread of conflict and learn to be an effective negotiator, can find new levels of confidence and awareness. And what is possibly even more important, such a parent provides a fine role model for his child.

One remembers Hollingworth (1942), who made two points that we might reconsider with regard to the parent's modeling for the child. First, she noted, speaking of academics, that if a highly gifted child's "abilities never receive the stimulus of genuine challenge...the situation tends to form in him the expectation of an effortless existence" (p. 258). Parents who keep up the battle not only to change unfortunate external circumstances, but also to modify their own personalities for the sake of those they love, can provide a worthy model for their children of the joys and rewards of purposeful, profoundly difficult work.

Hollingworth (1942) also writes powerfully of the importance of highly gifted *(Continued on page 21)*

SURVIVING THE BLESSING Continued from page 20

children learning "to suffer fools gladly" (p. 260). She points out their need "to learn how to tolerate in a reasonable fashion the foolishness of others," saying "it is more necessary that this be learned than that any school subject be mastered" (p. 260). Parents have unique opportunities to discuss this matter at home with real examples that have meaning to the child and to the adults. Even more wonderful is the opportunity that parents have to provide examples of detached analysis of frustrating social situations and of gracious management of, and when necessary, toleration of foolishness.

Perhaps the greatest gift any parent can give a child is compassionate respect. When parents are themselves gifted and come to realize the importance of this fact in their lives, they seem likely to bring to the parenting of their gifted children a special tenderness. Of course, they need to maintain enough of a boundary to allow each child to have his or her own experience of life; but healthy parents who have qualities like those of their children can be more sensitive to emotional cues, and more patient in gently exploring exactly how things are for the child. And maybe they can be more aware of how a person – whether child or adult – can joyfully survive this sometimes awkward blessing. ■

REFERENCES

Delisle, J. R. (1984). *Gifted children speak out.* New York: Walker & Company.

Hawking, S. 1988. *A brief history of time.* New York: Bantam.

Hollingworth, L. S. (1942). *Children above 180 IQ Stanford-Binet: Origin and development.* New York: Octagon Books, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc.

Jung, C. G. (1938). *Psychological types or the psychology of individuation.* (H. G. Baynes, Trans.). London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd.

Silverman, L. K. (1986). Parenting young gifted children. *Journal of Children in Contemporary Psychology, 18.* 73-87.

Ann Boyer, M.A., MSW, is a mother, former teacher, and social worker who is interested in hearing from readers who see themselves in this article: 7 Carriage Lane, Littleton, CO 80121.

HOMESCHOOLING RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES OF GIFTED CHILDREN

(Continued from page 15)

HOME SCHOOL RESEARCHER, Brian Ray, Science, Math, & Computer Science Education Department, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331. $10/year. A quarterly publication of research regarding home education; includes information about doctoral dissertations, master's theses, and other research conducted by a variety of individuals, colleges, state departments of education, and public and private agencies.

STATE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTERS. Most states have homeschooling organizations, listed in Growing Without Schooling. Many states also have their own state newsletters; contact the state association for information.

LEGAL & LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANCE

HOME SCHOOL LEGAL DEFENSE ASSOCIATION, 731 Walker Road, Suite E-2, Great Falls, VA 22066. Telephone: (703) 759-7577. Provides a legal insurance program for homeschooling families.

HEWITT RESEARCH FOUNDATION, P. O. Box 9, Washougal, WA 98671. Telephone: (206) 835-8708. Dr. Raymond Moore and staff maintain an updated listing of state laws and legislation in process, and often provide testimony on behalf of the homeschooling movement to state legislatures and state governments regarding proposed homeschooling laws and rules.

CURRICULUM SUPPLIERS

Families may obtain curriculum supplies from regular textbook publishers as well as publishers who have developed material especially for the homeschool market. Information about these materials is widely available. Reviewed below are several homeschool curricula developed especially for gifted children.

HEWITT-MOORE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER, P. O. Box 9, Washougal, WA 98671. K-12. The Child Development Center will design an individualized curriculum for each child, plus provide progress reports, counseling and assistance, and a variety of other services. The Center has recently added a gifted elementary curriculum to their offerings. The focus is on enrichment, not acceleration. The program requires parents to become familiar with the unit approach to teaching. Christian emphasis, but nondenominational. The Center has successfully served thousands of children.

OAK MEADOW SCHOOL, P. O. Box G, Ojai, CA 93023. K-8. Oak Meadow provides curriculum based on Rudolph Steiner's philosophy of child development and education and the Waldorf schools. Especially good for creatively gifted children.

KONOS CURRICULUM, P. O. Box 1534, Richardson, TX 75083. K-6. This is a unique curriculum, Christian in orientation, specifically designed for homeschooling families. It differs from other available curricula, incorporating an integrated curriculum and designed so that all children in the family can study the same topic at his or her own academic level. For gifted children, it provides an overall curriculum structure while respecting the child's advanced intellectual development and need to experience, evaluate, and synthesize knowledge. Many project and enrichment ideas included; far better than many enrichment curricula used in school G/T programs.

Dorothy Knopper

ANTENNA . . . .

Current Developments in Gifted Education

Is Gifted Education Elite?

A parent of a very bright kindergartner was recently told by a teacher that programs for gifted students are "yuppy."

An administrator in a large urban school district considers special programs for the gifted to be undemocratic.

Unfortunately, elitism continues to be an issue for those who do not understand the unique needs of gifted and talented children. They describe programs for the gifted as snobbish, upper class, "yuppy."

"There is nothing more unequal than equal treatment of unequal people." This statement, attributed to Thomas Jefferson, speaks to education in our country; and we, educators and parents, must listen to its message.

Can we – should we – provide equal treatment for all the children in our schools? Does a mentally retarded child require the same curriculum as a highly gifted child? Should a child with a learning disability be expected to progress at the same pace as an outstanding reader?

According to Barbara Clark (1988), "it is...undemocratic to refuse to allow gifted children the right to educational experiences appropriate to their level of development. We do not ask retarded children to work in the same programs and to progress through the same curricula as the more typical learners. How, then, can we justify holding back the gifted student? It would be unjust to require all individuals to perform the same tasks at the same level"(p. 172).

Do gifted students feel they are elite? On the contrary, in spite of their advanced capabilities, they often feel inferior to their peers. They may view their differentness as negative. In fact, they frequently suffer from low self esteem, a sense of not belonging – non-conformists in a conforming society.

An 11-year-old boy from Alabama states, *"People expect me to be real stuck-up and sometimes treat me as if I am. I sometimes even exaggerate and tell people I make lower grades than I really do because I don't like to feel like an oddball."* (Delisle, 1984, p. 46).

Her initial involvement with a gifted program prompted an 11-year-old Connecticut girl to comment, *"... I was nervous and afraid that my friends would laugh at me. I was afraid that they would think I was 'too good for them' and I'd not be accepted into the crowd. I became ashamed of being gifted and at times I felt guilty, as if I had done something wrong"* (Delisle, 1984,p. 113).

Elitism cannot be used to describe genuine needs of children. All children perform at different levels; all have varying potential and require diverse means to meet that potential. Yet all children – retarded, average or gifted – are equal in that they have critical needs that must be met.

How do we balance equality and individual needs? The only answer is to provide curriculum that is appropriate to each individual child. And isn't that what education is all about? ■

REFERENCES

Clark, B. (1988). *Growing up gifted*. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill.

Delisle, J. R. (1984). *Gifted children speak out*. New York: Walker.

Dorothy Knopper is State Consultant on the Gifted, Colorado Department of Education and "Open Space" columnist for *Roeper Review*.

Well, we needed to decide between the three-four combination and applying to colleges...
Precious Gifts

Linda Sinclair

from parent to parent

Shut Out By Peers

It is a tragic fact that gifted children are often ridiculed and shut out by their peers. Those traits that make them special and unique in the eyes of their parents label them as "different" in the eyes of their classmates.

For Marcia Greason of Bridgeton, Maine, the social problems faced by her daughter Elizabeth, age 13, were severe enough that she and her husband Randy decided to take action.

"Elizabeth's sixth grade year was horrendous. The problems first began in fifth grade, when Elizabeth decided her needs had to be met in other than traditional ways, and she enrolled in a college course. That set her apart from her peers, because they couldn't understand why she was doing different things than they were."

"In sixth grade, the situation grew worse. Friends she had known since kindergarten began teasing her with questions she was expected to know the answers for, but if she did, she was ridiculed. She would come home from school and say that they just didn't like her, but that she could fabricate a person they would like."

"We could see how unhappy she was. Elizabeth was simply closing down; her body language changed, the sparkle was gone from her eyes, and her voice became so quiet. We knew we had to do something to get our Elizabeth back."

"After a lot of tears and late night discussions, we decided to go ahead and skip seventh and eighth grade and accelerate her into ninth. Fortunately, the schools and teachers here have been very supportive."

"The change in Elizabeth has been profound, like night and day. She is happy, and gets along very well with her classmates. She was one of four nominated for Winter Carnival Queen, and even felt comfortable enough with herself to consider running for class office. She is starting to blossom again."

In May, Elizabeth was elected class president.

Linda Sinclair is a freelance writer from Denver, Colorado and parent of a highly gifted child.

Parent to Parent is your forum for sharing ideas with other parents of gifted children. We want to hear your story—what has worked, or not worked, for your family. Please send your name, address, and phone number to *Understanding Our Gifted*, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122, and we will contact you for details.

Understanding Our Gifted™

Don't Delay. Return This Order Form Today!

☐ New Subscriber
☐ Gift Subscription (for your friends, teachers, relatives)
☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD

Card # ____________________
Expiration Date ____________________
____
Signature

YES! Start my subscription to *Understanding Our Gifted™*. Payment is enclosed or charge my VISA or MASTER CARD. (Just $30 a year) – (Canada-$35 U.S.; Foreign $37.50 U.S.) NO RISK GUARANTEE: If at any time you decide *Understanding Our Gifted* is not for you, write 'cancel' across the label and return it for a full refund of unmailed issues.

NAME ____________________
COURTESY OF (if gift) ____________________
ADDRESS ____________________
CITY __________ STATE __________ ZIP __________

Make checks payable to SNOWPEAK PUBLISHING, INC. ™ , P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122 (303) 798-0986

THE BULLETIN BOARD

This space is for you!

We are happy to use THE BULLETIN BOARD in any way that will serve you. This will enable you to support each others' needs. Send us your request and we'll print it on the bulletin board as space permits.

We will gladly print announcements, requests for pen pals, requests from parents looking for others with similar needs, information about parent support groups, requests or messages from teachers, counselors, administrators, pediatricians and researchers. **Please send us your message today for the next issue**. We also welcome letters to the Editor.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Those who are drawn to work with gifted children and those who parent gifted children are often gifted grown-ups, and we have developed a new journal just for you. *Advanced Development*, the first publication on adult giftedness, becomes available this month.

The first issue contains an article on "Parents of Extraordinarily Gifted" as well as an interview with Annemarie and George Roeper, co-founders of the Roeper City and Country School. Please see the Editorial column on page 2 for additional contents.

The journal will be published annually. Subscriptions are $20. If purchased in conjunction with *Understanding Our Gifted*, the discounted price is $45 for both publications.

We are certain you will enjoy this fresh perspective on adult giftedness in a format that is both scholarly and readable.

NEXT ISSUE

FOCUS:

LEARNING STYLES

SPATIAL LEARNERS
Linda Silverman

SIX TYPES OF GIFTEDNESS IN THE HOME
George Betts and Maureen Neihart

A genius is
a person who, seeing
farther and probing deeper
than other people,
has a different set of ethical
values from theirs,
and has energy enough to
give effect to this extra
vision and its valuations
in whatever manner best
suits his or her specific
talents...

– George Bernard Shaw –

Saint Joan

UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED™
P.O. Box 3489
Littleton, CO 80122

BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
Littleton, CO
Permit No. 493

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED™

Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

Volume 1, Issue 4

March 1989

Spatial Learners

Linda Silverman, Ph.D.

Giftedness comes in many forms, and some of these guises are applauded in school, while others are neglected. One particular type of gifted child shows up rather frequently on the doorstep of the Gifted Child Development Center. I call this child the "spatial learner" because of the particular pattern of strengths and weaknesses disclosed in our testing.

Spatial learners are children who grasp the whole situation at once instead of in a step-by-step sequence; therefore, they learn better holistically rather than sequentially. They do extraordinarily well on tasks with spatial components: solving puzzles, tracing mazes, duplicating block designs, counting blocks in a pictured array in which some are hidden, envisioning how a folded and cut piece of paper would appear opened up, and similar items. They often have amazing imaginations and may spend more time daydreaming than we would like ("Earth to Harry, Earth to Harry..."). Spatial abilities are essential in a number of fields: mathematics, science, computer science, technological fields, mechanics, and most creative endeavors (visual arts, music, etc.), and we need to foster talent in these domains.

(Continued on page 7)

FOCUS ON:

LEARNING STYLES

INSIDE

The Hidden Gifted Learner
Suzanne Perry 3

Parenting the Gifted
Elizabeth Meckstroth 4

Instructional Strategies
Joyce VanTassel-Baska .. 5

The Reading Room
Stephanie Tolan............... 6

The Highly Gifted
Kathi Kearney.................. 13

New **Adolescent Passages**
Thomas Buescher............ 14

Creative Ventures and Encounters
Jerry Flack........................ 17

Current Developments in Gifted Education
Dorothy Knopper............ 18

From Parent to Parent
Linda Sinclair................... 19

Profiles of the Gifted in the Home Environment

George T. Betts, Ed.D.

No matter what is currently being done to meet the diversified needs of the gifted and talented in the public schools, much more needs to be accomplished by parents to facilitate the total growth of their children in the home environment. Parents are often not aware that their sons and daughters are gifted, nor are they aware of their needs or what should be done in the home and school. Betts and Neihart (1988) developed an approach which examines different profiles of the gifted and talented. These profiles describe the gifted not as one unique group of students, but as many different personality types, characterized by different attitudes, behaviors and needs *(See Figure 1 on pages 10-11).*

THE SUCCESSFUL
Type I

When programs for the gifted and talented are first developed, the majority of gifted children and youth identified are usually Type I's. They have learned to adapt to the system, will be successful in school and are usually positive and easy to raise in the home. Parents love them, peers admire *(Continued on page 9)*

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends,

We have received several requests from readers to include information on adolescent giftedness, an area that has been sorely neglected in the literature. Therefore, in this issue we are inaugurating a new column, **Adolescent Passages**, by Dr. Tom Buescher, editor of the first book on this topic: *Understanding Gifted and Talented Adolescents: A Resource Guide for Counselors, Educators and Parents* (available from the Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois). To introduce his column, Tom has provided us with a short feature-length article describing some of his research on advice gifted adolescents give to each other. Thanks for joining us, Tom.

Thanks to our readers for this excellent suggestion. We are also planning a special issue on adolescence toward the end of 1989. As Stephanie Tolan has pointed out: as soon as you think you've figured out how to deal with your gifted child, he or she enters adolescence and the whole picture changes.

Some of the other topics we plan to address in the next year or so are:

Issue # 5:	Parenting the Gifted
Issue # 6:	Moral Development
Issue # 7:	Underachievement
Issue # 8:	Gifted Girls
Issue # 9:	Adolescence
Issue #10:	Thinking Skills
Issue #11:	International Perspectives
Issue #12:	Gifted Children with Learning Problems

What additional topics would you like to see covered in future issues? Who would you like us to invite as contributors? As you can see, we do listen to our readers. Please let us hear from more of you. If you are interested in writing an article for **Understanding Our Gifted**, we will be happy to send you our author's guidelines.

Thank you again for your input and for helping to make this newsletter a collaborative endeavor.

Linda Silverman

Understanding Our Gifted™
Published by: **Snowpeak Publishing, Inc.™**

Publisher
Linda Mancini

Editor
Dr. Linda Kreger Silverman

Cartoonist
Linda Leviton

Column Editors
Dr. Thomas Buescher, *Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University*

Dorothy Knopper, *State Consultant on the Gifted, Colorado Department of Education*

Martha Morelock, *Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study, Tufts University*

Dr. Suzanne Perry, *Project Think, Aurora Public Schools, Aurora, Colorado*

Linda Sinclair, *Freelance Writer, Denver, Colorado*

Stephanie Tolan, *Author and Consultant, Waterford, New York*

Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska, *College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia*

Advisory Board and Regular Contributors
Dr. Nicholas Colangelo, *University of Iowa*

Dr. James Delisle, *Kent State University*

Dr. Jerry Flack, *University of Colorado, Colorado Springs*
Column Editor

Dr. Holly Hultgren, *University of Denver*

Dr. Nancy Jackson, *University of Washington*

Kathi Kearney, *Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children, Auburn, Maine*
Column Editor

Elizabeth Meckstroth, *Counselor and Author, Dayton, Ohio*
Column Editor

Dr. Wendy Roedell, *Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, ESD 121, Seattle, Washington*

Dr. Annemarie Roeper, *Co-Founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the Roeper Review*

***Understanding Our Gifted*, a *SNOWPEAK* publication, (ISSN 1040-1350) is published bimonthly by Snowpeak Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122. Subscriptions are $30 for 1 year (6 issues). Back issues/single copies are $6.50. Canadian subscriptions are $35.00 U.S. Foreign subscriptions are $37.50 U.S. Third class postage paid at Littleton, CO. Subscription inquiries should be sent to the publishing office. For subscription address changes, send mailing label along with new address to *UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED*, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO, 80122, eight weeks before moving. Material in *Understanding Our Gifted* may be copied for personal use only.** **No material may be reproduced for publication without written permission of author and publisher. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright 1989, SNOWPEAK PUBLISHING, INC. All rights reserved.**

Suzanne M. Perry

THE HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

The Gifted Delinquent

Ann studied the portraits of her two sons, arranged side by side on the wall behind the piano. Both of them wore their thick black hair brushed to the right side; startlingly blue eyes gazed back at her as she pondered their pictures. She wondered how two children who looked so much alike could be so very different. There was Jacob, the older of the two... president of the Honor Society, top 2% of his class, National Merit Scholar. Then there was Jonathan, just as able as his older brother, Ann believed, but what credits, if called upon, would she someday list after his name? Dreamer?...Drop-out?... Delinquent? Yet which child, even now, could she depend on to best assess a new problem and come up with the most sensible, workable solution? Why, Jonathan.

The Puzzle

This perplexing dichotomy is not unique to Ann's family. Rather it is a circumstance that has puzzled educators for years. How can two students of very similar apparent ability, sometimes even siblings, be so very divergent in the manifestation of their potential? Seeley (1985), in his study of adolescent giftedness and delinquency, suggested that the key to the mystery may lie in the *kind* of intelligence demonstrated by the individual. After administering full psychoeducational evaluations to 268 youths who had entered a suburban juvenile justice system in one year, he found that 18% (48 subjects) were gifted. This constituted over three times as many gifted youths as he expected to find. However, he hypothesized that many of these subjects demonstrated *fluid* intelligence, which he characterizes as problem solving with little reliance on previously learned strategies or verbal mediation. This is in contrast to the more conventionally recognized *crystallized* intelligence, which uses verbal mediation and sequential logic in problem solving. It is the difference between the intuitive leaper and the logical ladder climber. School recognizes and affirms our ladder climbers because their strategies are familiar and they can demonstrate how they got from point A to point B. But what of the leapers, who may also get the right answers, but whose solutions are delivered in a bolt of lightening? "How did you get your answer?" or "Can you show us the steps?" are unanswerable questions for the leaper.

The leaper, with fluid intelligence, has perhaps as many strengths as the ladder climber, but his or her strengths are often not the ones recognized by schools. So what happens? Leapers feel powerless when they continually find that there doesn't seem to be any way to please the teacher so they give up trying. Often, too, these students seek out a peer group that does appreciate their talents and the group begins engaging in anti-social behavior as a response to pressures to conform from school and home.

Putting Some of the Pieces Together

What steps can be taken to channel these fluid talents into more socially acceptable avenues? Offering these students opportunities in and out of school that both capitalize on their strengths and have a positive focus seem to work best:

- Help the student find an out-of-school mentor
- Look into the possibility of the student earning some credits through community service
- Provide inservice for teachers and administrators on the characteristics of fluid learners
- Offer training for the student on how to work within the system
- Give some nonacademic responsibilities to the student

Ann squared her shoulders with resolve as she turned away from the pictures and walked to the telephone. While her two sons were different, neither one was necessarily any better than the other. Each of her children needed her support at different times as they grew up. While Ann didn't believe in doing everything for her sons, she did believe in being their advocate. Today was the time to call the high school to inquire about what provisions they made for students with fluid intelligence. ■

REFERENCE

Seeley, K.R. (1985, May). Gifted adolescents: Potentials and problems. *NASSP Journal*.

Suzanne Perry, Ph.D., is Instructional Resource for Project Think in the Aurora Public Schools in Colorado, and author of the children's book, *Giftedness: Living with it and Liking it*.

Elizabeth Meckstroth

PARENTING

And the children shall lead them...

Let's indulge in enjoying and appreciating the privilege of living with children who think, see and feel differently from the way we do. We are richer with experiencing greater depth and dimensions of possibilities. We become more; we have more surprises, more fun. Our children lavish more life on us.

Parenting a gifted child is like living a work of art. We can be the canvas that colors and glows with our child's brush of exuberance from finding the Little Dipper from the kitchen window. We can be the strings on which he strums his fury from spying on a squirrel's sovereign reign at the bird feeder. Growing with a gifted child is reflecting and resonating beyond what we knew and felt into a realm of expanded, exaggerated imagination, emotion, fears, needs, discoveries.

Our children expand – even explode – our reality. They look and feel deeper, wider, longer. They awaken us from gazing passively. They invite us to see ants play games with pop-tart crumbs. They evoke our shrivel from grief for the old oak that is cut and hauled away to clear for the new tool shed.

Especially if they feel that we appreciate and admire them, they may trust us and reveal some of their extraordinary visions and sensitivities. **Wonder** is an essential element that we need to offer in order to be catalysts of encouragement and opportunity. Wonder what Jill is musing while she is absorbed in brushing her cat... Wonder what Eddie fears as he hears the ambulance siren... Wonder what Carl resents when his fingers fumble along his clarinet keys... And the more we wonder, the more we love. (What a delicious feeling to give to yourself!)

Being gifted is being too idealistic, too sensitive, too unrealistic, to intense, too perfectionistic, too emotional. Being gifted is making too much out of everything. Whenever we're tempted to temper our child by telling her that she is too emotional or too organized, we might consider this a chance to coax us into being more sensitive and organized ourselves – a door opening to believe more than we could have ever imagined – an occasion to play with possibilities that our own eyes might not have shown us.

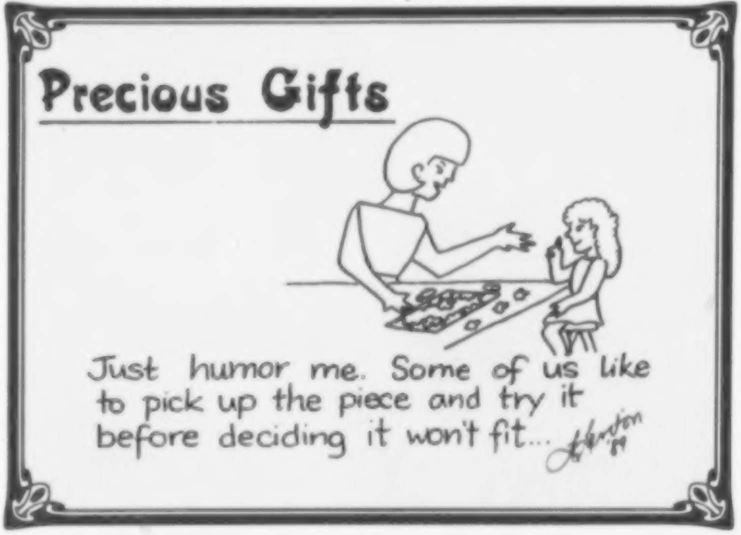
In what ways do we reward children for matching our own notions of excellence, success, or being right? Who owns giftedness, anyway? As parents, we need to step back and examine the ways we might – oh, so subtly – punish some components of genius out of our children. Can we open to receive the other right answer and the seventh right answer and the nineteenth right answer?

Giftedness is also an **attitude.** Part of genius is relentless attention to working out the details from the imagined model into making it real. Imagination needs to express itself. This can be their personality, their art work, or the scientific principle that is being explored (Leland, 1989). Parents can be a safe place for that expression to go. How can you appreciate your child for giving you exhilaration of discovering and being MORE? ■

REFERENCE

Leland, K. (1989). *Menus for impulsive living* N.Y.: Doubleday.

Elizabeth Meckstroth is a therapist and consultant in Dayton, Ohio and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child.*


Precious Gifts
Just humor me. Some of us like to pick up the piece and try it before deciding it won't fit...

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Joyce VanTassel-Baska

Teachers and parents many times are in an excellent position to provide guidance to students in several areas of psycho-social development. These guidance techniques may be seen as integral to other learning activities taking place in the classroom. One important teaching approach is termed **bibliotherapy**, which implies the use of books to help gifted children reach important understandings about themselves and others. Choosing books with a gifted child as a protagonist is an excellent way to begin to have students identifying some of their problems in others. Thus, through discussion gifted students can come to new awarenesses about how to cope with similar problems. One such example follows:

Problem identified:
Understanding differences

Book: *Lord of the Flies*

Key questions:

- Why was Piggy ostracized by the group?
- What might he have done to prevent such treatment?
- What happens to people who feel rejected, according to the author?
- Can you think of a time when you have felt rejected? How did you respond or react? How might you have changed your behavior to obtain more favorable results?

(Write individually and then discuss as a group)

An excellent teacher reference for this type of activity is a booklist from the National Council of Teachers of English entitled *The Gifted Child in Literature*.

A second area of psycho-social development that teachers can help the gifted explore is their sense of perfectionism. By focusing on open-ended activities and leading students to engage in "safe" risk-taking behaviors, teachers can set a climate that encourages students to accept the realization that most situations in life do not require *one* right answer, thus rendering unimportant the standard often used by gifted students to rate themselves and others on the way to "perfection." An example of such an activity follows:

Pass out pictures (the same picture for every three students) that are impressionistic in style, and ask students to respond to them according to the following set of questions:

1) What do you observe in the picture? (*Make a list of what you see*)
2) What ideas does your picture convey?
3) What feelings does your picture evoke?
4) If you were to identify with an object in your picture, what would you identify with and why?
5) Now spend a few minutes synthesizing your observations, ideas, feelings, and reactions to your picture in whatever form you wish. You may choose to write a poem, draw a picture, create a descriptive story, etc.

After each student has responded individually to these questions and activities, have groups of three students each discuss each other's perceptions of the pictures. The instructor then may ask individual students to share their pictures and their reactions to them. Follow-up may include whole group discussion of similarities and differences among the pictures. Such an activity can also introduce a unit of study on cultural or individual differences.

A third area of exploration with the gifted is forming meaningful relationships and developing friendships. For this area of psycho-social development, again the use of bibliotherapy techniques may be most useful. Books such as *The Bunny Who Wanted a Friend*, suitable for primary age students, is a good example of a key tool. Questions like the following can be used to elicit understanding of the strategies by which we gain friends:

1) What are all the reasons that the bunny did not have a friend?
2) What was wrong with his method of making friends?
3) What was his "secret" to finally finding a friend?
4) What if you were the bunny? How would you have tried to get a friend?
5) Why were the bunny and the bird friends at the end of the story?

List all the reasons.

All of these bibliotherapy strategies are viable for use with the gifted in both home and school settings. ■

Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Ed.D., is Jody and Layton Smith Professor of Education at William and Mary College, in Williamsburg, Virginia. She is editor of *Comprehensive Curriculum for Gifted Learners.*

Stephanie S. Tolan

THE READING ROOM

Welcome back to the reading room. During this visit we will once again deal with two rather serious, but very different books.

The first, *The Lottery Rose* by Newbery winner Irene Hunt, does not specifically label its central character gifted; in fact, Georgie is seven and a half and doesn't yet read. His school records label him "retarded," as well as "incorrigible." Only as his story unfolds do we discover that he has a variety of remarkable gifts. What we know of him at first is only that he is a severely abused child whose life is regularly endangered by his alcoholic mother's violent boyfriend.

Published in 1976, this book was among the first to confront the issue of child abuse, and it looks unflinchingly at a problem so much on the national conscience since the death of Lisa Steinberg. We are reminded here that giftedness is not a matter of social class and privileged background. It appears in slums as well as in suburbs. We are also reminded that a child whose energies must be concentrated on physical survival is unlikely to be identified as gifted by school methods. Cynics might quibble with the ending – most of society's Georgies are never found, never rescued, never given the chance to bloom. But it's a beautiful book.

E.L. Konigsburg's book *(George)* is one of the few books that forthrightly deals with a profoundly gifted child in a realistic, caring way – one that shows genuine unerstanding of the probelm of a child who simply **does not fit**. A review in *G/C/T* a few years ago complained that the main character, eleven year old Benjamin Dickinson Carr, seems mentally unstable, and so perpetuates the image of giftedness as close to insanity. But what this book really does is to show the reality of life for a child whose mind is lightyears beyond his age. Even in Astra, a special school for the gifted, Ben's extraordinary ability puts the sixth grader with seniors for science classes. There he does and does *not* belong.

The George of the title is Ben's way of coping with his differences – a persona who lives inside him, and George is a funny, wise-cracking and foul-mouthed internal self who can observe and comment on the world in ways Ben cannot. He is a friend for a friendless child, a repository of vast information, a creative intelligence. In fact, George *is* Ben's profound giftedness. Ben is considered crazy by a world unattuned to his mental differences, but he is, (or he and George are) finally, extra ordinarily sane. The normal world wishes to drive George away, which would be to turn Ben *normal*. Ben's sanity is that he finally promises eternal loyalty to the concentric twin who is so important a part of who he is. He learns to accept his gifts fully, valuing their positive aspects enough to cope with the negatives. All highly gifted kids and their parents should read this book! ■

Stephanie Tolan, from Waterford, New York, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child.*

SPATIAL LEARNERS Continued from page 1

SEQUENTIAL LEARNERS

However, education – particularly at the elementary level – tends to be sequential, with each new concept building on the previous concepts taught. **Children who learn sequentially do well in school.** They tend to have good memories and enjoy activities requiring memorization. Many even enjoy the opportunity to practice the skills they have learned through drill sheets. There is a sense of security in repeating a learned concept in a familiar context. "I know I can do this; therefore I enjoy doing this." Sequential learners may also delight in timed tests and contests that involve speed of response. They retrieve facts more rapidly than spatial learners.

Sequential learners learn to read phonetically. They have excellent facility at breaking a word into parts, sounding out those parts, and then putting the parts back together again. This facility also enables them to become good spellers. They may have good handwriting, and hand in neat papers. Handwriting requires high levels of motor sequencing, another sequential skill. Sequential learners are good organizers and analytic thinkers. They make good editors, proofreaders and critics, because they can see what is wrong with their own work and the work of others. These skills are highly valued by teachers and lead to high achievement.

Because sequential learners learn in a step-by-step fashion, they can usually trace the steps they have taken to reach a conclusion. "Show your work" is ideal for these students. They learn new skills by trial and error, retracing their steps when they make mistakes, and trying out new strategies as needed. They are good at planning, predicting consequences and evaluating situations. They may be seen as model students by their teachers, who are usually sequential learners as well. This match between the learning style of the students and their teachers further facilitates academic success.

SPATIAL LEARNERS

By way of contrast, spatial learners **hate** rote drill and memorization. They detest repetition. Once they grasp the concept, they fail to see the point of doing 5 or 100 problems that are just like the first one. They have difficulty with phonics. They are better readers if they have taught themselves to read before they enter school. Spelling and handwriting are not their strong suits. They often overlook details. They are not well organized. They do poorly in timed tests. Such children are usually not the teacher's favorites.

Spatial learners thrive on abstract concepts, inductive learning strategies, multidisciplinary studies, holistic methods, and activities requiring synthesis – the staples of gifted programs. Yet, many of them cannot gain access to gifted programs because of lack of academic achievement in the regular classroom. Their abilities are frequently misjudged because of the discrepancy between the way they learn and the way material is presented in the traditional classroom. They may be so frustrated by lack of success at rote memorization, drill and timed tests that they become behavior problems. School can often be a miserable experience for them.

Spatial learners who have poor sequential skills struggle with rote learning *(Continued on next page)*

TABLE I

SEQUENTIAL AND SPATIAL LEARNERS

Sequential Learner	Spatial Learner
Step-by-step learner	Whole-part learner
Learns by trial-and-error	Learns concepts all at once ("Aha")
Analytic thinker	Systems thinker; sees complex relationships of variables
Good at computation	Good at mathematical reasoning
Follows directions well	May be inattentive in class; needs to be shown
Learns phonics easily	Poor at phonics; needs a sight word/whole language approach
Good at spelling	May be poor at spelling; needs to visualize spelling words
Good at rote memorization	Poor at rote memorization;learns abstract concepts easily
Good at timed tests	Poor at timed tests; timed tests should be avoided
Good handwriting; neat	Poor handwriting; should be allowed to use a keyboard whenever possible
Well organized	May be disorganized
Progresses sequentially from easy to difficult material	Learns complex systems easily, but struggles with easy material
Learns from models	Prefers to develop own methods of problem-solving
May need some repetition to reinforce learning	Learning tends to be permanent; turned off by drill and repetition
Can show work easily	Reaches conclusions without steps
Good at biology and foreign languages	Good at geometry and physics
Academically talented	Creatively/technologically gifted
Early bloomer	Late bloomer

and blossom when they are given more complex material to learn. Their learning style is **paradoxical**: they learn difficult material quite easily, but may make errors on simpler tasks. Despite the fact that they make great intuitive leaps, grasp exceedingly complex material, excel at mathematical and scientific reasoning and demonstrate high levels of creativity, if they are weak in sequencing they are seen as "poor students." Their mechanical difficulties – computation, spelling and handwriting – are viewed as evidence that they are not "really gifted" and their high abilities are ignored. Those who show their giftedness in class discussions, extracurricular projects, or creative ideas in their Odyssey of the Mind groups, are often labeled "underachievers" because they do not perform as well in written work.

Spatial learners may look like washouts in elementary school, but watch out for these "late bloomers." They are likely to set the world on fire as adults. They are the creatives, the synthesizers, the systems thinkers, the ones who see the big picture – the forest – while others simply see the trees. They may miss the easy skills, but whiz through complex material. The harder the better. They may take two years to memorize their math facts, and then ace geometry and calculus.

Of course, there are children who are adept at **both** sequential and spatial skills. Children with a high level of proficiency in both these domains tend to have astronomically high IQ scores. They have the same strengths as spatial learners without the deficiencies, and they respond well to the same types of material: the more advanced and complex, the better.

Sequential learners who have poor spatial skills do well in most school subjects, and their spatial deficiencies are rarely detected. But they may experience difficulties in advanced technical subjects, such as geometry, physics and advanced mathematics or they may show less creativity than their spatial counterparts.

SEQUENTIAL WEAKNESSES

The specific pattern of strengths and weaknesses of spatial learners became apparent through analyzing test protocols of several hundred gifted children. The weaknesses are revealing. Like their sequential classmates, most spatially gifted children excel in abstract thinking, vocabulary, verbal reasoning, and, the ability to absorb information from their environment. Most advanced through the developmental milestones ahead of schedule in early childhood, and showed typical personality characteristics associated with giftedness (e.g., curiosity, excellent problem solving abilities, argumentativeness, sensitivity, intensity...). *However, the sequential learners have excellent short-term memories for specific details and the spatial learners do not.*

Items that confound the majority of spatial learners include repeating simple sequences of numbers, repeating sentences, naming the days of the week in order, repeating the elements of a short story, and solving simple arithmetic problems under timed conditions. These tasks have in common **auditory attention** and **sequencing ability**. Children who excel in these tasks usually do well in school, whereas children who do poorly on these items tend to have difficulty, particularly in elementary school.

Another set of items that are difficult for a number of spatial learners require **eye-hand coordination** and **motor speed**: copying a square, copying a diamond, copying complex figures from memory, copying a series of symbols under timed conditions. It is possible for a student to be exceptionally bright, to learn rapidly, to have high abstract reasoning abilities, and at the same time to have serious difficulties with sequencing, motor speed and/or eye-hand coordination.

A MASKED LEARNING DISABILITY?

When discrepancies between strengths and weaknesses are quite pronounced, the child should be diagnosed for a possible learning disability. Learning disabilities are often masked in gifted children because the children are intelligent enough to compensate for the problems and often can perform in the average range. The most frequent learning disability that we have seen in our cases at the Gifted Child Development Center is **auditory sequential** impairment, which may affect motor sequencing as well. A **motor sequencing** impairment can be detected by observing a child during a writing exercise.

- Does the child write much slower than other children?
- Does the child look cramped and uncomfortable while writing?
- Does the child get fatigued easily while writing?
- Are his or her letters jagged and disconnected instead of smooth and fluid?
- Does he or she mix upper and lower case letters, or manuscript and cursive letters?

Signs of auditory sequential impairment can also be detected by observing children's behavior in class and by analyzing their writing. Do they leave off endings of words, omit small words, and misspell words by leaving out the "soft" sounds (such as the **d** in "gardener")? Do they observe others to find out what is going on instead of "listening" to the directions? Do they appear inattentive and ask to have directions repeated? All of these can be signs of auditory sequential deficits. *Many of these children had chronic ear infections in early childhood which have impacted their listening skills.*

(Continued on page 16)

them and teachers select them for programs because they “buy” into the system, finish tasks on time, are extremely bright and want to learn.

Parents expect Type I's to be well-mannered and well-behaved. They are extremely positive and excited about school and do well on achievement tests and tests of intelligence, but gradually they may lose their ability to be creative and to be independent and self-directed. By the time they are in high school they are in the top ten percent of their classes and have won many awards. It appears that they will be extremely successful in life, but outstanding success in school does not predict outstanding success in life. The attitudes and abilities required in school are not necessarily the same ones which are required for outstanding performance and success in life. The Type I's have become convergent in thought and behavior. They are non-risk-takers, and often lack that deep self-esteem that allows them to venture into the unknown.

Parents need to facilitate independence in thought and action instead of requiring their children to conform to the wishes of other people. These children need to make their own decisions and to develop ownership for those decisions and their impact upon the family. For Type I's, an important rule for parents is to “do it WITH them, rather than TO them.”

In addition, parents should not place pressure on these children to perform, since they try so hard to please. Many of the parents of Type I's have been high achievers themselves, and want their children to emulate them, although the parents are not aware that they are placing extreme pressure on their children.

THE CHALLENGING

Type II

Type II's are not like Type I's and there is no way to change their behavior so that they will become Type I's. These students are not seen as successful in school because they do not “buy” into the system and do not develop appropriate behavior. They are bored and frustrated with the system and have not learned to deal effectively with others. They often find themselves frustrated, critical and defensive. If challenged, they do not give in, but fight back through inappropriate behavior.

At home, Type II's are difficult to raise and will question parental authority. Negotiation and contractual agreements are essential in developing positive relationships in the home as well as the school environment. Many times parents do not understand the feelings, needs and behavior of these students. Because their behavior is inappropriate, parents and teachers want to change them, but it is essential to understand and accept them as they are. Without acceptance, they will become more frustrated and will continue to act out.

These children respond positively to family projects, which give them a sense of pride and ownership.

THE UNDERGROUND

Type III

“I don't want to be smart. I don't want to be different. I want to belong!” Students sometimes feel that it is not okay to be gifted. One student said, “Why should I be gifted? My friends will put me down, my parents will expect more from me and my teachers will make me do more and harder work!” And so many of our children begin to hide their giftedness.

At home, these children may have few friends, will be involved in individual activities and sports, and will often risk less and less. They are pleasant at home and will usually not challenge authority, but may become less confident in thought and action. At home, parents must support these students and encourage them in their friendships and the development of their interests. Many young girls are a combination of Type I and III. They are usually pleasant and conforming at school, but they may also be unwilling to risk being different. They may be reluctant to develop their gifts and talents.

Parents need to encourage friendships with other gifted children when possible, and to serve as models for them to view learning as a life-long process. Family activities and outings are essential, as well as providing them with involvement and power within the home.

THE DROPOUTS

Type IV

Although these students may display the behaviors of Types I and III, they are usually Type II's who have not been understood, accepted or supported. Enough is enough! It begins early, sometimes as early as third or fourth grade, and they begin to withdraw emotionally. They usually feel defensive and at odds with the system.

If intervention is not initiated very early, these students will see themselves as losers and will not be able to compete with their peers. They will continue to act out, get in trouble and drift further from acceptable behavior. By the time they have decided to drop out of school, they usually dislike their parents, their teachers and themselves. They are resentful and angry. The system does not work for them.

Usually, the only effective form of help is family counseling. Individual counseling and involvement in a different educational environment are only temporary measures. If they remain in the same school and are not involved in family intervention, they will probably not graduate, and will not be productive as adults, although there are a few who will “make it on their own.”

(Continued on page 10)

Figure 1

PROFILES OF THE GIFTED & TALENTED

	FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES	BEHAVIORS	NEEDS	ADULTS & PEERS PERCEPTIONS OF TYPE	IDENTIFICATION	HOME SUPPORT	SCHOOL SUPPORT
TYPE I Successful	• Boredom • Dependent • Positive self-concept • Anxious • Guilty about failure • Extrinsic motivation • Responsible for others • Diminish feelings of self and rights to their emotion • Self critical	• Perfectionist • High Achiever • Seeks teacher approval and structure • Non risk taking • Does well academically • Accepts & conforms • Dependent	• To see deficiencies • To be challenged • To take risks • Assertiveness skills • Autonomy • Help with boredom • Appropriate curriculum	• Loved by teachers • Admired by peers • Loved & accepted by parents	• Grade point average • Achievement Test • IQ Tests • Teacher nominations	• Independence • Ownership • Freedom to make choices • Time for personal interests • Risk taking experiences	• Accelerated and enriched curriculum • Time for personal interests • Compacted learning experiences (pre-testing) • Opportunities to be with intellectual peers • Development of independent learning skills • In-depth studies • Mentorships • College & career counseling
TYPE II Challenging	• Boredom • Frustration • Low self-esteem • Impatient • Defensive • Heightened sensitivity • Uncertain about social roles	• Corrects teacher • Questions rules, policies • Is honest, direct • Has mood swings • Demonstrates inconsistent work habits • Has poor self control • Is creative • Prefers highly active & questioning approach • Stands up for convictions • Is competitive	• To be connected with others • To learn tact, flexibility, self awareness, self control, acceptance • Support for creativity • Contractual systems	• Find them irritating • Rebellious • Engaged in power struggle • See them as creative • Discipline problem • Peers see them as entertaining • Want to change them • Don't view as gifted	• Peer Recommendations • Parent nomination • Interviews • Performance • Recommendation from a significant, non-related adult • Creativity Testing • Teacher advocate	• Acceptance and understanding • Allow them to pursue interest • Advocate for them at school • Modeling appropriate behavior • Family projects	• Tolerance • Placement with appropriate teacher • Cognitive & social skill development • Direct and clear communication with child • Give permission for feelings • Studies in-depth • Mentorships • Build self-esteem • Behavioral contracting
TYPE III Underground	• Unsure • Pressured • Confused • Guilty • Insecure • Diminished feelings of self and rights to their emotions	• Denies talent • Drops out of G/T and advanced classes • Resists challenges • Wants to belong socially • Changes friends	• Freedom to make choices • To be aware of conflicts • Awareness of feelings • Support for abilities • Involvement with gifted peers • Career/college info. • Self-acceptance	• Viewed as leaders or unrecognized • Seen as average and successful • Perceived to be compliant • Seen as quiet/shy • Adults see them as unwilling to risk • Viewed as resistive	• Gifted peer nomination • Home nomination • Community nomination • Achievement testing • IQ Tests • Performance • Teacher advocate	• Acceptance of underground • Provide college & career planning experiences • Time to be with same age peers • Provide gifted role models* • Model life-long learning • Give freedom to make choice	• Recognize & properly place • Give permission to take time out from G/T classes • Provide some sex role models • Continue to give college & career information

PROFILES OF THE GIFTED & TALENTED (continued)

	FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES	BEHAVIORS	NEEDS	ADULTS & PEERS PERCEPTIONS OF TYPE	IDENTIFICATION	HOME SUPPORT	SCHOOL SUPPORT
TYPE IV: Dropouts	• Resentment • Angry • Depressed • Explosive • Poor self-concept • Defensive • Burn out	• Has intermittent attendance • Doesn't complete tasks • Pursues outside interests • "Spaced out" in class • Is self abusive • Isolates self • Is creative • Criticizes self & others • Does inconsistent work • Is disruptive, acts out • Seems average or below • Is defensive	• An individualized program • Intense Support • Alternatives (separate, new opportunities) • Counseling (individual, group and family) • Remedial help with skills	• Adults are angry with them • Peers are judgmental • Seen as loners, dropouts, dopers, or air heads • Reject them and ridicule • Seen as dangerous and rebellious	• Review cumulative folder • Interview earlier teachers • Discrepancy between IQ and demonstrated achievement • Incongruities and inconsistencies in performance • Creativity testing • Gifted peer recommendation • Demonstrated performance in non school areas	• Seek counseling for family	• Diagnostic testing • Group counseling for young students • Nontraditional study skills • In depth studies • Mentorships • Alternative out of classroom learning experiences • G.E.D.
TYPE V: Double Labeled	• Powerless • Frustrated • Low self esteem • Unaware • Angry	• Demonstrates inconsistent work • Seems average or below • May be disruptive or acts out	• Emphasis on strengths • Coping skills • G/T support group • Counseling • Skill development	• Seen as "weird" • Seen as "dumb" • Viewed as helpless • Avoided by peers • Seen as average or below in ability • Perceived to require a great deal of imposed structure • Seen only for the disability	• Scatter of 11 points or more on WISC or WAIS • Recommendation of significant others • Recommendation from informed special ed. teacher • Interview • Performance • Teacher Advocate	• Recognize gifted abilities • Challenge them • Provide risk taking opportunities • Advocate for child at school • Do family projects • Seek counseling for family	• Placement in gifted program • Provide needed resources • Provide alternative learning experiences • Begin investigations and explorations • Give time to be with peers • Give individual counseling
TYPE VI: Autonomous	• Self confident • Self accepting • Enthusiastic • Accepted by others • Supported • Desire to know & learn • Accepts failure • Intrinsic motivation • Personal power • Accepts others	• Has appropriate social skills • Works independently • Develops own goals • Follows through • Works without approval • Follows strong areas of passion • Is creative • Stands up for convictions • Takes risks	• Advocacy • Feedback • Facilitation • Support for risks • Appropriate opportunities	• Accepted by peers and adults • Admired for abilities • Seen as capable and responsible by parents • Positive influences • Successful • Psychologically healthy	• Grade point average • Demonstrated performance • Products • Achievement Testing • Interviews • Teacher/Peer/Parent self nominations • IQ tests • Creativity Testing	• Advocate for child at school and in community • Provide opportunities related to passions • Allow friends of all ages • Remove time and space restrictions • Do family projects • Include child in parent's passion	• Allow development of long-term, integrated plan of study • Accelerated and enriched curriculum • Remove time and space restrictions • Compacted learning experiences with pretesting • In-depth studies • Mentorships • College & career counseling and opportunities • Dual enrollment or early admission • Waive traditional school policies and regulations

© 1988, George Betts & Maureen Neihart

PROFILES OF THE GIFTED Continued from page 9

Acceptance of Type IV's is crucial at home, although it is very difficult to accept and live with these youth because of their behavior. They are defensive, sometimes explosive and often depressed. An attitude and environment that encourages cooperation needs to be developed, but cannot be accomplished by the family members alone. Outside intervention is a must!

DOUBLE LABELED

Type V

Special education has been developed to identify the special needs of some children, and to develop individual educational plans to work with these special needs, but what about the children with special needs who are also gifted? There needs to be a "marriage" between the fields of special education and gifted education.

Rarely do we identify these children as gifted because of their other needs, but it is possible for them to be gifted as well. At home and at school, the first task is to become aware of their gifts and talents and then to provide activities in their areas of strength.

Parents must help Type V's to develop and participate in activities outside of school. Family projects are essential to help foster feelings of belonging, ownership and participation with people who accept them.

THE AUTONOMOUS

Type VI

The goal for parents and teachers is to help all of our gifted children and youth to become self-directed, independent learners, with the appropriate skills, concepts and attitudes for life-long learning and success. Students who might be categorized in one or more of the above five types are all capable of becoming Type VI's.

These children, youth and adults have learned many of life's secrets, and are able to succeed, be happy and be true to themselves. They are self-confident, self-accepting and are able to be accepting and facilitative of others. *For the Type VI, life is not a struggle, but an opportunity.*

At home parents need to continue to do what they are already doing. In other words, they have been accepting and facilitative of their children and have given them the opportunity to develop their abilities in many different areas.

An essential ingredient for parents is to *"protect the passions"* of their children and even participate in them, because passions are rarely encouraged in school. True motivation for our gifted comes when they are able to participate in their passions. Some passions may be family-related, while others will become individual projects. Children should be encouraged to follow their passions. Parents may become role models by following their own passions.

Children, youth and adults who are autonomous are active, not reactive; positive, not negative; and involved in life on a maximum level. They love themselves, the people around them, and are willing to seek the unknown, their areas of passion. Autonomous learners do not hesitate to risk, do not wait for the help of others to initiate projects of interest; they seek challenges because of the confidence they possess.

(The poem shown below is included for parents to share with their gifted children.) ■

REFERENCE

Betts, G. & Neihart, M. (1988). Profiles of the gifted and talented. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 32,* 248-253.

George T. Betts, Ed.D., is director of the Center for the Education and Study of the Gifted and Talented at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley.

AS YOUR PARENT

by Donni and George Betts

As your parent
I am here to help you grow,
to nurture you,
to love you unconditionally,
to help you to become
what you are fully capable of becoming.

I will try to accept you as you are,
and hope you will try to accept me as I am.
I will be honest with you in our communication
and listen to your ideas, dreams,
disappointments and accomplishments,
without judging.

I will provide opportunities for you
to discover your "passion" areas of learning
and share my "passions" with you.
I will provide you with opportunities
to become responsible for yourself
and give you the necessary skills,
ideas and attitudes to ignite your desire
for becoming a life-long learner.

I will accept you as a unique,
marvelous individual,
with your own ways of living
and learning and growing.
And, above all, I will
love you, just as you are.

©1988 Donni and George Betts

Kathi Kearney

THE HIGHLY GIFTED

The Early College Option (Part I)

In this issue we begin a series exploring the Early College Option for highly gifted students.

—Nicole, a junior in high school, was already bored with her high school classes. To make matters worse, she only needed two additional credits in order to graduate—but one of these was senior English, which her school did not permit students to take until the senior year. Faced with the choice of another year of high school or the opportunity to begin college early in a special residential program for young college students, Nicole left home a year earlier than either she or her parents had planned.

—James accelerated his schooling by three years, graduating from high school at age fourteen. Along the way, he accumulated 15 college credits from courses taken in the late afternoon, evenings, and summers at a local community college. His outstanding academic record allowed him to enter a highly competitive college with advanced standing.

Nicole and James both began college early, but in different ways and for different reasons. Early college entrance does not necessarily mean becoming a full-time student in a residential setting at age sixteen or younger, although occasionally that may be the best option. There are many ways for highly able students to combine college with elementary, junior high, or high school; to use college coursework as a form of enrichment as well as acceleration; and to try out this accelerative option part-time first before considering a full-time commitment. For very highly gifted children, skipping one grade in school or being placed with older children for instruction in some subjects may simply not be enough. Part-time early college entrance can also provide an accelerative "bridge" to more radical acceleration if it is needed.

When should early college entrance be considered?

1. **Early college entrance can be considered in place of less challenging classes.** Nicole was actually caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place. A brilliant girl, she was held back by an educational bureaucracy unresponsive to the needs of a highly gifted student. Her initial solution was to discuss her predicament in confidence with admissions officials at a local college. They agreed to enroll her in college courses, but her high school refused to accept the college coursework for high school credit. Disappointed, she eventually decided that appropriate and challenging coursework was more important to her than an additional year at home with family and friends, or graduating with her class. She made the difficult decision not only to enter college early, but to attend a residential college a thousand miles from home.

2. **Early college coursework can initially be considered as a form of enrichment, which may become accelerative as the student grows older.** At age eight, James attended a college course his mother was taking, as no child care was available. He would occasionally even participate in discussions. Familiar with the college environment, at age ten he found an interesting summer course, and was permitted to enroll. Several courses later, he realized that he had completed the equivalent of half the freshman year, though that was not his or his family's original intention.

Nicole and James both used the early college experience to meet their needs for a more challenging academic environment but chose different patterns of early college attendance based on individual factors. In the next issue, we will meet two more young college entrants and explore additional reasons for considering this accelerative option. ■

Kathi Kearney is Director of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in Auburn, Maine, a resource teacher, and editor of *Highly Gifted Children*.

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

There's still time to order while supplies last!

☐ SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS VOL 1 – ISSUE 1
☐ EARLY DEVELOPMENT VOL 1 – ISSUE 2
☐ HIGHLY GIFTED VOL 1 – ISSUE 3

Send $6.50 per issue (prepaid) to: **Snowpeak Publishing, Inc.**
P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122 or call (303) 798-0986.

☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD
Card # ____________________
Expiration Date ____________
____
Signature

NAME ____________________
ADDRESS ____________________
CITY ____________ STATE ______ ZIP ________

Thomas M. Buescher

ADOLESCENT PASSAGES

Advice Giving Among Talented Adolescents

Adolescence stretches between the revels of childhood and the initial commitments of adulthood, an intriguing journey of adventure, mystery, and surprise that beckons every youngster. For talented young people, the course is no less perilous or stimulating. Challenges abound in every corner of experience: biological growth and sexual maturity, relationships with family and friends, personal growth in identity and values, and the rapid development of productive talent.

Adolescent Passages, borrowing a phrase coined by one of the pioneer adolescent theorists and clinicians, Peter Blos, will try to distill some of the poignant issues talented adolescents face between the ages of eleven and twenty, offering commentary and insights for all of those who live with, teach, counsel, nurture, and are shaped by them along the route. Future topics might touch on questions of adjustment, motivation, intimacy and identity, as well as family and schooling matters.

Adolescents enjoy giving each other advice, and talented adolescents are no exception to this phenomenon. While wise counsel from parents, older siblings, teachers or school counselors may be cautiously considered and tentatively accepted, advice from a prized best friend or group of peers seems to be instantly digested! Educators and clinicians have slowly come to know what parents of adolescents have long experienced: in most situations, 'natural advice' from a trusted friend is more quickly accepted than cautious, considered advice from any adult.

In a few middle school and high school districts around the United States, professionals concerned with the overall mental health of adolescents have begun to view this spontaneous effort to seek and give advice among peers as a natural talent to shape and use to help other students. These 'peer helper' or 'peer counseling' programs have been erected on *natural networks* in which adolescents seek out advice-giving friends for their empathy and moral support, problem-solving, and fairly expert consumer knowledge of community services (McManus, 1984).

Adolescents with exceptional talents are often seen by teachers, counselors, and peers as attractive sources for spontaneous, thoughtful advice (Buescher, 1985). It appears that talented students' temperament and ability to lead makes their empathy for peers a visible and desirable trait. Yet while much has been studied about how outstanding talent unfolds in the family and responds to articulate schooling, surprisingly little is known about *why* these adolescents offer so much advice to each other, *what* they actually give as advice, and how *sound* and *useful* such advice might be.

With the help of Noma Krasney (Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University), I recently completed a systematic study that explored these 'natural advice' contents and processes among highly talented adolescents. Our interest was in exploring to what degree the variations in this kind of advice-giving 'peer-to-peer' might be influenced by developmental factors such as age, sex, and experience.

Over 200 adolescents participated in the study, ranging in age from 12 to 21, all of whom had achieved outstanding scores on the SAT taken prior to high school entrance. The participants were asked to consider particular situations facing same-sex peers and to offer appropriate support, advice, or direction as they saw fit.

A number of interesting patterns emerged when we analyzed the results. For one, adolescent girls and boys brought quite different perspectives to how *serious* they perceived particular situations to be. For example, girls viewed interpersonal conflict, parental fighting, alcohol abuse, and the pressuring by a partner to engage in sex as being significantly more serious than boys, regardless of their age. This greatly influenced the kinds of advice-giving boys and girls suggested to a same-sex peer. Girls offered quite a few broader, more reflective options, encouraging a peer to explore and test several ways to handle an issue. Boys, on the other hand, limited their advice giving to specific steps to follow in order to avoid the situation altogether or minimize the bad effects or consequences.

Similar findings arose when teenagers were asked to suggest *who* might best help a friend out of a problem situation. Girls posed more sources for help than boys, nearly balancing their nominations between parents, friends, or professionals; boys recommended consulting an adult over five times more often than consulting a friend.

Even stronger influences seem to be exerted at times by the age of the talented young people we studied. As might be expected, older adolescents generally offer better quality advice than younger ones, but this seems

ADOLESCENT PASSAGES (Continued from page 15)

more likely for girls than for boys. In the case of being pressured to engage in premarital sex, for example, older adolescent girls – perhaps reflecting more experience and perspective on the matter – often advise female peers to take *direct action*, but do not intervene themselves. They ask their friends: "What's important to you in this relationship? What do you want to give and get out of it?" "Have you told this guy you're not ready for sex with him or anyone?" *In effect, the older teens in this study see a need to be empathic but they also* ***directly*** *encourage their friends to think and* ***act for themselves.***

> ***For example, girls viewed interpersonal conflict, parental fighting, alcohol abuse, and the pressuring by a partner to engage in sex as being significantly more serious than boys, regardless of their age.***

Younger adolescent girls are less apt to be direct. Instead, they offer advice that is vague, sometimes even contradictory, saying: "I wouldn't let any guy force me into doing it with him! I'd tell everyone about him so they would steer away from him. That's what you should do – if not, tell me. I'll take care of him." Rather than listening and being empathic, this style of advice giving seems threatening, even punitive, implying "I wouldn't let this happen to me – there must be something wrong with YOU."

A similar contrast is reflected in how these teenagers understand parental conflict – fighting between the spouses – at various points in the adolescent passage. Older females encourage each other to realistically envision what role a daughter can play in the conflict, to be objective, and to provide support to one parent or the other to discontinue the fighting. Adolescent males, on the other hand, who also vary a good deal by age about how to resolve parent conflicts, rely more on a distancing approach ("Remember, it's not *your* problem – it's your parents! Just keep out of it.") and searching for ways to avoid being sucked into the vortex of the squabble.

In the final analysis, our research has mapped out a great deal of information about how a large cross-section of highly talented adolescents goes about offering advice to each other without the benefit of training, support, or skilled supervision. As might be expected, the quality of the advice given is quite uneven, but interesting. It is apparent that the level of natural skill shown by gifted adolescents is quite comparable to that of much older and less 'talented' college-age students (Gouze and Keating, 1986).

Clearly, the results can have important implications for how we understand gifted adolescents and try to construct support networks for them at school and in the community. *The weight of the evidence underscores how fitting it is to enlist the resources of talented adolescents to sensibly counsel each other.* But at the same time such efforts demand the time and skill of trained counseling personnel, a commitment on the part of school staff to *not* leave bright students to their own devices, and continuing efforts by parents and teenagers themselves to encourage schools to actively enhance these natural skills.

Beyond the appropriateness and necessity of developing better advice giving by talented adolescents, larger questions linger. Perhaps most important is the matter of why the boys and girls in this study, regardless of age, always seem to advise in different ways. Is there a sex-linked predisposition that seems to encourage one kind of advice giving by boys and another by girls? It is possible that the provocative explanations about differences in moral reasoning first suggested by Carol Gilligan, Harvard University, might also be instrumental in shaping how adolescents give advice.

Gilligan (1982) has proposed that most boys make moral choices based on principles of justice and legal rights; yet, most girls make their choices using broader ideas of care, need, and human responsiveness within a framework of justice. She thinks that these sex-linked differences in how young people weigh issues and choose solutions might be associated with how they have learned to define themselves through their relationships prior to and throughout adolescence. Consequently, we wonder if how talented boys and girls advise each other is rooted in who they believe they are according to their gender.

What we have observed about advice-giving among these talented students might boil down to sharp differences in developmental goals: boys as individualists, girls as networking interdependents. Perhaps it is time to not only listen to the advice adolescent boys and girls give to each other, but also to listen to our *own* as men and women who work with them. ■

REFERENCES

Buescher, T.M. (1985). A framework for understanding the social and emotional growth of gifted adolescents. *Roeper Review*, *8*(1), 11-15.

Gilligan, C. (1982). New maps of development: New visions of maturity. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *52*(2), 199-212.

Gouze, L. & Keating, D. (1986, March). Life skills coping strategies. Paper presented at First Biennial Meeting, Society for Research on Adolescence, Madison, WI.

McManus, J.L. (1984, April). A model for school/community interventions with high school student paraprofessionals. Paper presented at the Midwestern Psychological Association Meeting, Chicago, IL.

Thomas M. Buescher, Ph.D., is a Research Scholar, Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University, and editor of *Understanding Gifted and Talented Adolescents.*

SPACIAL LEARNERS Continued from page 8

Whether the spatial learning style is simply a preference or whether it is accompanied by a sequential deficit severe enough to be considered a learning disability, the following techniques have been found helpful for reaching these children at home and at school.

TEACHING STRATEGIES THAT WORK

Spatial learners *remember what they see and often forget what they hear.* The trick to teaching them effectively is *showing* them, rather than telling them. Many cannot take notes or complete written work because their fine motor coordination is poor. If so, they should be taught to use a keyboard as early as possible. They often understand complex concepts, but may have difficulty doing easy, sequential tasks. They are not step-by-step learners. They need to be shown the big picture first – the goal of instruction.

Assure these children that *they will get smarter as they get older,* and as the material becomes more consistent with their learning style. Many spatially oriented learners suddenly blossom at puberty (Dixon, 1983). One possible reason for this miracle is that the material becomes challenging enough to force the integration of the two hemispheres. Most spatial learners compensate well for sequential weaknesses in adulthood, and excel in areas such as computer technology, aeronautics, physics, art, architecture, music, and research mathematics.

The simple modifications recommended below have enabled many children to be successful and happy in school for the first time. As they became aware of their spatial learning pattern, the children were able to view their differences as potential strengths rather than as deficiencies, and they became highly successful learners. When spatial learners are placed in the right environment, where there is a good match between their learning style and the way they are taught, they shine. School need not be a place of suffering for them; it can be a joy. ■

REFERENCE

Dixon, J.P. (1983). *The spatial child.* Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Linda Silverman, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist and Director of the Gifted Child Development Center in Denver, Colorado.

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR SPATIAL LEARNERS

1) Write directions on the board, on overheads, or on paper.
2) Let them *observe* others before attempting new tasks.
3) Use visuals and hands-on experiences.
4) Touch their shoulders to get their attention when they do not hear you.
5) Use a sight approach to reading rather than phonics.
6) Use a visualization approach to spelling:
    a) Show them the spelling word.
    b) Have them close their eyes and picture the word.
    c) Have them spell the word backward with their eyes closed.
    d) Have them spell the word forward with their eyes closed.
    e) Have them write the word.
    f) Use a kinesthetic approach, such as sand tracing or sandpaper letters, with young children.
7) Have someone teach them how to type and let them type assignments on a computer or typewriter; this will improve fine motor coordination as well as increase motivation.
8) Use fantasy books rich in visual imagery to enhance interest and ability in reading.
9) Have them discover their own methods of problem solving (e.g., instead of teaching division step-by-step, give them a simple division problem, with a divisor, dividend and quotient. Have them figure out how to get that answer in their own way. Don't ask them to show you their steps. When they succeed, give them a harder problem with the solution already worked out and see if their system works.)
10) Give them advanced, abstract material, even when they have difficulty with easy, sequential material.
11) Avoid rote memorization; use more conceptual approaches.
12) Avoid timed tests. If they are required, allow these children to take them at home or alone, trying to beat their own past record, rather than competing with their classmates.
13) Use material that has high interest for the children.
14) Engage them emotionally through encouragement.
15) Use humor frequently in instruction (not sarcasm).
16) Use adaptive techniques to assist them in devising methods of compensating, such as:
    a) Buy a *Perfect Speller* as a handy guide to spelling.
    b) Use a word processor with a spelling correction program.
    c) Use earphones to block out noise when studying.
    d) Make lists to help remember things.
    e) Practice visualization as a memory aid.
    f) Use rhythm and music to aid memorizing.
    g) Tape record lectures instead of taking notes.
    h) Estimate answers before calculating.

SG

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY

Creative
Voyager

On this voyage we will travel to the evil and frightening land of **TELEVISION**, *known to be populated by ferocious beasts that rob gifted children of their creativity.*

Creative Ventures And Encounters

Jerry Flack
Tour Guide

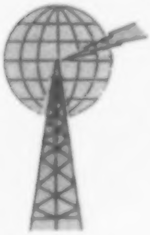
Captain Kangaroo is one the many persons who have dubbed television "the great national babysitter." Television, too often, is the enemy of reading, literacy, AND creativity! Typical television fare robs children of the opportunity to use their creativity. In a book, the author's words invite children to imagine what characters and settings look like. With television, all viewers see the actors and sets chosen by one producer. Games and books invite children to ponder ideas and situations and consider alternatives. Television tosses images and messages at children rapidly, and allows no time or opportunity for questions or feedback.

What can parents do about this intrusive and pervasive medium? First, determine the level of family use. Television is seductive. Your family may be watching more television than you think. Next, try a temporary TV blackout. This will afford a test of the level of addiction to television in your home! Can your family go totally without television for a week, a month, or six weeks? Meanwhile, engage in some creative family brainstorming. What alternatives to television viewing can the family members generate? A beginning list may include building models, creating scrapbooks, writing letters, baking foods, going for walks, playing games, visiting neighbors, planning future family trips and vacations, and visiting museums. Reading is, of course, a great alternative activity, but it does not always have to be of the silent variety. When was the last time your family jointly read a book together? Children learn to love books when their parents model love and appreciation of literature.

Of course, not all television viewing is bad. Selective television viewing can be highly entertaining and educational. Public television specials bring the natural world into our living rooms and allow us to enter worlds we could never visit otherwise. The coverage of special events like the Olympics is dramatic in the nearly instantaneous human stories that unfold before our eyes. Once the beast in your home is tamed, use it to provoke creative reactions in your gifted children. Try some of these ideas. Suggest to your children that they write a special episode for their favorite family series (e.g., "The Cosby Show"). After they have polished their work, encourage them to send the script to the network, the address of which can be found in TV Guide. Children can also create board games for family play patterned after "Monopoly" or "CLUE," but wherein the characters, moves, and rules are related to characters from a favorite program, such as PBS Wonderwork's "Anne of Green Gables."

Assign children the task of using the creative advertising ploys and devices utilized in commercial television to create a one minute "razzle, dazzle" commercial in celebration of Dad's or Mom's birthday.

Here is yet another way for you to control the television, rather than having it control your family. Choose just one *(Continued on next page)*



ANTENNA . . . .

Current Developments in Gifted Education

"At their most unenlightened, some districts say they'll cut gifted education, which means the students who most benefit from schooling will be least served. The tactics are nothing less than educational sadism." (Scott, 1988)

Why is gifted education so tenuous? Why are programs for gifted students the first to be cut? When will education of the gifted become a stable and respected element of curriculum? Why is the maintenance of quality education for bright children such a struggle? Perhaps there *is* an aspect of sadism in our educational system.

In issue 2 of *Understanding Our Gifted*, Jana Waters describes the new federal "Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act." This is the first federal legislation since 1981 when the national office for gifted and talented education ceased to exist.

It has taken seven years for the leaders of this country to again put a value on the education of high potential youth. Will gifted education now become a firm priority among our legislators, or will the funding eventually be cut again when mediocrity wins more votes than excellence?

James J. Gallagher (1988) calls for a national agenda so that we can "maintain a steady course in navigating public policy" (p. 109). He identifies three major areas of need that are as yet unmet in educational programs for gifted students.

His first priority is the group of underserved gifted – e.g. underachievers, gifted handicapped, culturally diverse, very young gifted and gifted girls. He encourages educators to search out such high ability children and provide appropriate programming.

Gallagher's second theme is to upgrade program quality through an educational support system. He emphasizes the need for research; special training of teachers, counselors, administrators; and program evaluation.

Finally, Gallagher points out the need for collaboration with professionals in disciplines other than gifted education. Relationships with areas of curriculum, intellectual development, and technology need to be explored.

The new federal legislation is encouraging. It may, indeed, be the first step toward implementing Gallagher's national agenda. Let us hope that it is the first step in a continuum of quality education for the gifted. Perhaps the struggle is over.

Gallagher believes that the fulfillment of his national agenda is actually an "enlightened selfishness." Helping gifted children to reach their potential is an investment in our future. "In that sense," states Gallagher, "this national agenda is for all of us" (p. 114).

The gifted children that we write about in this newsletter will lead us into the future. Our educational system can ensure that they guide us wisely and peacefully. We have no choice but to adopt a national agenda of support for gifted education. ■

REFERENCES

Gallagher, J.J. (1988). National agenda for educating gifted students: Statement of priorities. *Exceptional Children*, *55*(2), 107-114.

Scott, J.J. (1988, Oct. 16). For a few dollars more. *The Denver Post*, p. 2.

Dorothy Knopper is State Consultant on the Gifted, Colorado Department of Education and "Open Space" columnist for *Roeper Review*.

(Continued from page 17) show for the family to watch together on a given evening. Watch the program half way through to its conclusion. (Tape the remainder of the show for later viewing.) In the meantime, turn the sound off and/or move to another room and engage the family in a creative problem solving session. First, each family member predicts how the program's characters will solve their problems or dilemmas. Then, the family pretends to be advisers. How could the characters creatively solve the problems they face? This discussion may take hours! Conclude the evening by watching the conclusion of the show together to determine the similarities or differences in problem solving skills of the show's characters and your family.

A brave and courageous parent can tame the beasts and monsters in evil TV land. ■

May the force be with you!

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Gifted Education at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and editor of *G/T News*.

Linda Sinclair

from parent to parent

When parents and educators are able to develop a partnership aimed at accomodating the gifted child's distinctive learning style, the educational experience becomes a thing of joy to behold for all involved. Don and Betty Romano of Purcellville, Virginia, and their son Gregory, 10, have found that working with a supportive school district can make public school education a viable and successful educational experience.

Don Romano reports: "When Gregory was in kindergarten and first grade, Betty and I first approached the school district and asked, 'What can you do for Gregory?' because we had observed him and felt that he was gifted. At the end of his first grade, we had testing done on our own and sent the results to John Hopkins University for evaluation. Their findings confirmed our suspicions that Gregory was indeed very gifted. Once they had something in black and white, the school district – particularly the superintendent – took the ball and ran with it. We were offered several options for the next school term, including moving to third or fourth grade, utilizing the services of tutors or enhanced programs."

"The level of support we have received from the school officials remains high. Gregory has been allowed to skip second, fourth, and sixth grade, and the district even paid two high school teachers to meet with Gregory at 7:30 a.m. each weekday morning during his fifth grade year to work with him in math and English. When his class would work on their assignments, he would pull out his work from the morning. He is now taking Latin and Geometry at the high school."

"This flexibility on the part of the school district officials has allowed Gregory to work at his own pace. His learning style is more independent; once he grasps a concept, he doesn't want endless repetition, he just wants to go onto something else. By allowing Gregory to advance at his own rate and pursue his interests through individual research and honors programs that challenge him, Gregory is a successful and happy student." ■

Linda Sinclair is a freelance writer from Denver, Colorado and parent of a highly gifted child.

Parent to Parent is your forum for sharing ideas with other parents of gifted children. We want to hear your story – what has worked, or not worked, for your family. Please send your name, address, and phone number to *Understanding Our Gifted*, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122, and we will contact you for details.

Understanding Our Gifted™

Don't Delay. Return This Order Form Today!

☐ New Subscriber
☐ Gift Subscription (for your friends, teachers, relatives)
☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD

YES! Start my subscription to *Understanding Our Gifted™*. Payment is enclosed or charge my VISA or MASTER CARD. (Just $30 a year) – (Canada-$35 U.S.; Foreign $37.50 U.S.) NO RISK GUARANTEE: If at any time you decide *Understanding Our Gifted* is not for you, write 'cancel' across the label and return it for a full refund of unmailed issues.

Card #________________
Expiration Date____________
____
Signature

NAME________________
COURTESY OF (if gift) ____________
ADDRESS ________________
CITY________STATE________ZIP________

Make checks payable to SNOWPEAK PUBLISHING, INC.™, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122 (303) 798-0986

THE BULLETIN BOARD

This space is for you!

We are happy to use THE BULLETIN BOARD in any way that will serve you. This will enable you to support each others' needs. Send us your request and we'll print it on the bulletin board as space permits.

ANNOUNCEMENT

THIRD ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM
of The Association for the Gifted (TAG)

"A NATIONAL AGENDA FOR EDUCATING GIFTED STUDENTS"

April 3, 1989 8:30 - 5:00 $65
Le Meridien Hotel, San Francisco

PANELISTS:
Dr. James J. Gallagher, Dr. Margie Kitano, Ms. Judie Hammerstad, Mr. Gene Maeroff

Registration information is available by writing to:

Mary Tallent, TAG Treasurer
Box 4560, College of Education
Texas Tech University
Lubbock, TX 79409

ANNOUNCEMENT

CONFRATUTE '89

July 17-28, 1989

The University of Connecticut School of Education

CONFRATUTE features presentations by best known leaders in education and creativity.

Registration information is available by writing to:

Sally M. Reis, Coordinator
CONFRATUTE '89
The University of Connecticut
U-7, Storrs Hall 28
231 Glenbrook Road
Storrs, CT 06269-2007

CORRECTION NOTICE

In the January 1989 issue, a computer error caused a portion of a paragraph to be omitted in the article entitled A Case for Acceleration by Holly Hultgren. The omission occured in the continuation from the last paragraph of page 9 to the top of page 10. Sorry for the oversight! The sentences should read as follows:

Caution should be used with this strategy, however, as low performance may be due to a learning disability, poor study skills, or an emotional problem that might be exacerbated by adding more pressure to the academic environment.

NEXT ISSUE

FOCUS:

PARENTING THE GIFTED

GUARDING THE GIFTED CHILD
Elizabeth Meckstroth

SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF THE HIGHLY GIFTED
Stephanie Tolan

Great spirits have
always found violent
opposition from
mediocrities. The latter
cannot understand
it when a man does
not thoughtlessly sub-
mit to hereditary
prejudices but honestly
and courageously
uses his intelligence
and fulfills the duty to
express the results
of his thought
in clear form.

- Albert Einstein -

UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED™
P.O. Box 3489
Littleton, CO 80122

BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
Littleton, CO
Permit No. 493

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED™

Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

Volume 1, Issue 5

May 1989

Special Problems Of Young Highly Gifted Children

Stephanie Tolan

Virtually all of the problems involved in raising and educating highly gifted children can be summed up in three words: they don't fit. We live in a world of norms and expectations; in many ways and much of the time these children function outside (often *far* outside) those norms and expectations.

Though we don't yet know enough about the workings of the human brain to know precisely what makes them so different, their differences are readily observable. Highly gifted children are an extremely heterogeneous group; nevertheless, there are some characteristic developmental differences that create a recognizable pattern.

Highly gifted children may sit, stand and walk early; they are likely to speak before other children, then read and do simple arithmetic at a very early age, without specific instruction; they often exhibit an unusually adult sense of humor; their vocabularies are large and varied and grow rapidly; they seem almost obsessively curious and persistent in finding the *(Continued on page 7)*

FOCUS ON:

PARENTING THE GIFTED

INSIDE

The Hidden Gifted Learner
Suzanne Perry 3

Parenting the Gifted
Elizabeth Meckstroth 4

Instructional Strategies
Joyce VanTassel-Baska . 5

The Reading Room
Stephanie Tolan 6

The Highly Gifted
Kathi Kearney.................. 13

Adolescent Passages
Thomas Buescher........... 14

Bright Beginnings
Martha Morelock........... 15

Creative Ventures and Encounters
Jerry Flack 16

Current Developments in Gifted Education
Dorothy Knopper........... 18

From Parent to Parent
Linda Sinclair 19

Guarding the Gifted Child

Elizabeth Meckstroth

The family in which a child grows up determines the spell under which that child lives for, perhaps, a lifetime. As parents, we are the ones entrusted with protecting the elusive facets of our children's giftedness. We need to move from **guiding** our gifted children to **guarding** their giftedness. If left to the expectations of society, many of our children's extraordinary abilities would be simply punished out of them. Their reality often extends beyond the comprehension of their companions: what they feel, see, know, is rarely perceived by others. Many – maybe most – people pare these children down to confirm their own experience. Society can become a tyranny that muffles the emergence of our children's differences. As parents, our role is to help our children acquire the strength to swim against the stream of collective prejudice so that they have the courage to be who they are and who they can become.

THE NEWS

The gifted identification process evokes many issues for parents. Sometimes "the news" is delivered in a tone of, "Congratulations, you have a gifted *(Continued on page 10)*

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends,

In this issue, our theme is the complex task of parenting gifted children. For many parents, having a gifted child is a mixed blessing. From birth on, these children present an unusual set of challenges: they sleep less than their parents; they need constant stimulation; they have difficulties fitting in with their agemates; they are often bored at school; they are more intense, perfectionistic, sensitive and easily frustrated than other children; and they can argue your socks off!

Perhaps the most frustrating part of raising a gifted child is not being taken seriously by others. When you express concern about the difficulties your advanced child encounters, some people treat you as if you just complained about having too much money. And even those who do take you seriously are likely to give you unuseable advice based upon misinformation. (An infinite supply of misinformation about the gifted is readily available. Just ask a group of strangers at a grocery store sometime what gifted children need and you'll see what I mean.)

On the following pages, you will meet many highly gifted children. It seems the more your child diverges from the norm, the more complicated parenting becomes. As Stephanie Tolan points out in one of the feature articles, exceptionally gifted children are many ages simultaneously and it is difficult to plan for their needs within an age-conscious society. This theme is echoed in Martha Morelock's description of the social implications of high intelligence and Kathi Kearney's column on early entrance into college.

Elizabeth Meckstroth, in the other feature article, warns of the potential dangers of enmeshed relationships in the family and gives concrete suggestions for helping children develop into autonomous young adults. Tom Buescher speaks to the typical developmental crises faced by adolescents in their search for selfhood. And, in the Reading Room, Stephanie Tolan provides some excellent suggestions for Young Adult reading.

We hope you enjoy these and our other regular columns. If there are other types of information you would like us to bring to you, please do not hesitate to contact us. We think *Understanding Our Gifted* is a unique publication. If you find it informative, please share the newsletter with your friends, school, parent group, pediatrician, legislator and librarian. Better yet, send us the names of people you think would be interested in *Understanding Our Gifted* and we'll be happy to send them complimentary copies. Thanks again for your support.

Linda Silverman

Understanding Our Gifted™

Published by: **Snowpeak Publishing, Inc.™**

Publisher
Linda Mancini

Editor
Dr. Linda Kreger Silverman

Cartoonist
Linda Leviton

Column Editors
Dr. Thomas Buescher, *Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University*
Dorothy Knopper, *State Consultant on the Gifted, Colorado Department of Education*
Martha Morelock, *Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study, Tufts University*
Dr. Suzanne Perry, *Project Think, Aurora Public Schools, Aurora, Colorado*
Linda Sinclair, *Freelance Writer, Denver, Colorado*
Stephanie Tolan, *Author and Consultant, Waterford, New York*
Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska, *College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia*

Advisory Board and Regular Contributors
Dr. Nicholas Colangelo, *University of Iowa*
Dr. James Delisle, *Kent State University*
Dr. Jerry Flack, *University of Colorado, Colorado Springs*
Column Editor
Dr. Holly Hultgren, *Principal, Boulder Valley Schools*
Dr. Nancy Jackson, *University of Washington*
Kathi Kearney, *Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children, Auburn, Maine*
Column Editor
Elizabeth Meckstroth, *Counselor and Author, Dayton, Ohio*
Column Editor
Dr. Wendy Roedell, *Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, ESD 121, Seattle, Washington*
Dr. Annemarie Roeper, *Co-Founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the Roeper Review*

***Understanding Our Gifted*, a *SNOWPEAK* publication, (ISSN 1040-1350) is published bimonthly by Snowpeak Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122. Subscriptions are $30 for 1 year (6 issues). Back issues/single copies are $6.50. Canadian subscriptions are $35.00 U.S. Foreign subscriptions are $37.50 U.S. Third class postage paid at Littleton, CO. Subscription inquiries should be sent to the publishing office. For subscription address changes, send mailing label along with new address to *UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED*, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO, 80122, eight weeks before moving. Material in *Understanding Our Gifted* may be copied for personal use only. No material may be reproduced for publication without written permission of author and publisher. Appropriate credit must be given.** **Copyright 1989, SNOWPEAK PUBLISHING, INC. All rights reserved.**

Suzanne M. Perry

THE HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

The Gifted Perfectionist

The Honors English class project is due tomorrow. Most students in the class are typing up the last few pages tonight and neatly inserting them in glossy folders for maximum "teacher impact." There are a few students, however, who are doing nothing of the sort.

Leslie's still at the library, feverishly tracking down obscure sources. She's worried sick about the one reference that is checked out and therefore unavailable to her. What if her teacher notices the omission? She considers not turning in a project at all if she can't turn in a perfect one.

Brad just snapped off the T.V. and sat down at the typewriter to begin a rough draft. "I do my best work under pressure," he tells himself. "Besides, I was really busy this week, so if this doesn't turn out that well, it won't be my fault. After all, what can Mr. Marshall expect in four hour's time?"

Margaret's project isn't done either. After her A + paper last month, she just can't seem to generate anything that seems halfway comparable to her. The thought of receiving a B or, heaven forbid, a C on this project strikes genuine terror in her heart. Right now she is desperately pleading with her mother to let her drop Honors English and move to a regular English class.

David whips page 75 out of his typewriter and reels in the paper for page 76. He estimates that if he can stay awake he should hit page 80 about 2:00 a.m. "80 pages should do the job," he decides with satisfaction. "There's no way anybody else will even come close to that, since the project was only supposed to be 10 pages."

These students are displaying four of the problems described by Miriam Adderholdt-Elliott (1989) that can sometimes arise out of the potentially positive gifted characteristic of perfectionism:

All or Nothing Mindset

For a student who is perfectionistic about school work, this tendency can be carried to the extreme where unless any given project is "perfect," it can't be turned in at all. These students are painfully afraid of having flaws revealed, so avoid situations in which judgment or assessment take place.

Procrastination

Procrastinators equate self worth with performance. The pressure is so great to always have an exemplary product that the children put off beginning it until the last minute. That leaves less time to have to deal with the pain of having an imperfect product.

Paralyzed Perfectionism

Children like Margaret are so petrified of failing that even enjoyable yet challenging activities are avoided for fear of not doing it perfectly the first time. Safe, average classes are generally selected by these students, instead of the honors classes which would be a much more appropriate match with their ability.

Workaholics

Self esteem, for workaholics, seems to be tied to external rewards. They continually strive to go above and beyond the call of duty to make sure that their product is the best. A major source of satisfaction comes from feeding on the praise they receive for their tremendous and often inappropriately directed effort.

What Works?

While perfectionism itself can be a healthy, positive manifestation of giftedness, when carried to extreme levels it can become self defeating. Training in looking at alternatives, along with group counseling with an accent on humor, seem to be two of the most promising strategies discovered so far (Barrow and Moore, 1983) for maintaining high levels of expectation without constantly trying to reach unattainable peaks of perfection.

When the Honors English projects are collected tomorrow, let's hope the teacher looks beyond the physical products (or lack thereof!) to the reasons that lie behind the symptoms. With a planned program that includes examining self expectations and alternatives *within* the classroom, along with parental understanding and encouragement *outside* the classroom, Leslie, Brad, Margaret and David will have the support they need to channel their perfectionism in self-productive rather than self-destructive directions. ■

REFERENCES

Adderholdt-Elliott, M.R. (1989). Perfectionism and underachievement. *G/C/T*, (January/February), 19-21.

Barrow, J., & Moore, C. (1983). Group intervention with perfectionistic thinking. *Personnel and Guidance Journal 61*(1), 612-615.

Suzanne Perry, Ph.D., is Instructional Resource for Project Think in the Aurora Public Schools in Colorado, and author of the children's book, *Giftedness: Living with it and Liking it.*

PARENTING

On Testing

Sean and his parents drove to our office from two states away. They were astute in recognizing that intelligence testing materials are available to many practitioners who are not sensitive to gifted children's enormous range of abilities or the intensity of their emotions. Sean's parents brought with them records from his private school testing which showed Sean's IQ as 132 at the age of six, and the psychologists's report from when he was 4, indicating that he had an IQ of 139. My testing first showed Sean's IQ at 152 on the *Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children - Revised* (WISC-R); then 180 on the *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Form L-M)*. Are we talking about the same child? How could this happen?

As is commonly done, the IQ score obtained through Sean's school was determined by a group test, in his case, the *Otis-Lennon*. Like many group tests given in schools, the Otis-Lennon primarily measures scholastic aptitude, rather than abstract reasoning abilities. These tests require one right answer and sometimes confuse children who consider many possible answers. Group tests have few items at the higher ranges of difficulty. These "ceiling effects" depress scores in the exceptionally high range. Almost half of gifted population is missed by group tests (Marland, 1972). The WISC-R also has a lower ceiling that the Stanford-Binet (L-M).

In addition to the problems of the tests themselves, there are many reasons children may not show what they can do in a testing situation. Some may not want to risk creating higher expectations from their parents and teachers. Others may be guarding themselves from being placed in a gifted program that requires them to be separated from their friends. Or a child might have an ear infection and not hear clearly. By contrast, it is impossible for children to perform on a test **beyond** what they know or what they can do!

When children feel safe and liked and encouraged, they are more likely to risk showing examiners who they are and what they know. They are more likely to guess when they are not absolutely certain. In the case of Sean's testing at age four, for example, we do not know if he was eager to "play" with the person administering the test or whether he was uncomfortable with the examiner.

One of the most important ingredients in obtaining an accurate test score is rapport with the examiner. Now, I want to give you my "trade secret" for establishing rapport with children. When I arrange an appointment to see a child, I always request that the child select about a dozen favorite photographs to show me. Then I sit with the child and the parent(s) and enjoy being led into the child's world. The child feels in control of the situation. I add interest and enthusiasm to what I see. It's magic! If you ever want to help your child become comfortable with an adult, ask if the adult will plan time to look at a few photos before beginning your arranged purpose.

Research continually confirms that parents know their children best (Silverman, Chitwood, & Waters, 1986). For example, Jacobs (1971) found that parents could identify 61% of their gifted kindergarten children. By contrast, their teachers identified only 4.3% of these children. If you suspect that your child is not being recognized as gifted and stimulated in accordance with his or her abilities, you might pursue having some independent assessment. Numbers, derived through objective evaluation from a professional, may help get the attention and credibility of school personnel. However, it is interpretation – what those numbers mean – and what they do **not** mean – that is essential to understand your child. So be sure to select a knowledgeable individual to assess your child. The following guidelines may help.

A Testing Test

- Is the examiner experienced in testing gifted children?
- Does he or she have a good reputation among your "gifted community"?
- Did your child enjoy the experience?
- Do you think the test scores accurately reflected your child's abilities? *(If not, seek a second opinion.)* ■

REFERENCES

Jacobs, J. (1971). Effectiveness of teacher and parent identification of gifted children as a function of school level. *Psychology in the schools*, *8*, 140-142.

Marland, S., Jr. (1972). *Education of the gifted and talented.* Report to Congress of the United States by the U.S. Commissioner of Education. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Silverman, L.K., Chitwood, D.G., & Waters, J.L. (1986). Young gifted children: Can parents identify giftedness? *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, *6*(1), 23-28.

Elizabeth Meckstroth is a therapist and consultant in Dayton, Ohio and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Joyce VanTassel-Baska

Grouping

In this column, I would like to focus on grouping strategies and highlight aspects of different approaches that can serve the gifted learner. Without addressing the grouping issue, much of the power of any differentiated curriculum or instructional plan is lost. For it is in the grouping arrangement that the gifted have the potential to fully respond to any curriculum.

Cooperative Learning Groups

Cooperative Learning has become very popular in recent years. All students in the group contribute actively to the problem under study, and group energy propels learners toward mastery of the material offered. To make cooperative learning effective for the gifted, however, ability and interest must be considered in establishing such groups. Cooperative learning can be a powerful way to organize gifted learners for a particular project in which each student has a role to perform.

Cluster Grouping

In Cluster Grouping gifted students are assigned to one teacher as part of an overall class at a particular grade level. Thus, the gifted can be grouped and regrouped within the classroom to accommodate different instructional needs. For academic subjects, however, generally this cluster group works together on the same instructional plan while other students follow a different plan. Some studies have found cluster grouping more effective than pull-out models for primary-aged gifted learners.

Grouping By Subject Area

Perhaps the most common strategy at all levels of instruction is ability grouping. While this strategy can be effective, there are some limitations to it. Many times there is random assignment of gifted students to classrooms, resulting in groups that are less homogeneous than needed for many gifted learners. Moreover, the strategy focuses only on two subject areas: reading and mathematics. Thus, many gifted students sit through science and social studies at a level far below their potential, and the most gifted readers and mathematicians still have to leave the classroom to find a peer group. This model should be extended to other subject areas.

Grouping by Dyads and Triads

This strategy allows gifted learners to find one or two true peers in the classroom with whom they can work effectively. Sometimes these pairings occur naturally and other times they are carefully nurtured by an insightful teacher. This approach to learning is ideal for initiating independent projects and for having students move ahead in content areas somewhat independently. Rather than having an isolated student working alone on advanced math or doing an enrichment project, it is better to have two or three students doing such assignments together, even if there are some differences in ability level. As long as the gifted learners are well-motivated and interested in the learning task, some ability differences can be tolerated. This grouping approach also encourages social development beyond the classroom in the form of study groups or less formal get togethers.

Grouping by Learning Centers

Many elementary classrooms establish learning centers and have students actively participate in center activities according to a rotating schedule throughout the week. Gifted learners are typically accommodated by having either extended activities in each center geared to their level of need or by having a gifted center where all instructional activities are geared to their level. This approach provides instructional alternatives for all class members and enables students to develop responsibility for their own learning in selected areas of the curriculum.

Cross-age Grouping

Cross-age Grouping allows gifted learners, within two or three grade levels of each other to work together in areas of strength and interest. Some schools provide classrooms across grade levels. Others establish such groups of gifted students at predetermined times during the week. This technique is frequently used in small schools where there are few gifted children at each grade level.

All of the approaches described above are important to consider in providing an appropriate instructional design for gifted learners at the classroom level. Since even the most critical opponents of ability grouping voice support for instructional grouping, it is vital that schools enhance their programs with variations of the grouping strategies discussed above. Without such provisions, the gifted have limited access to appropriate level challenges in the context of today's classrooms. ■

Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Ed.D., is Jody and Layton Smith Professor of Education at William and Mary College, in Williamsburg, Virginia. She is editor of *Comprehensive Curriculum for Gifted Learners*.

THE READING ROOM

Welcome back to the reading room. This time and next the books under discussion will not be, technically, *children's* books. The term used for them these days is "young adult." In the outside world one would expect young adults to be in their early twenties – away from home, but not yet firmly settled into adult responsibilities. In the contemporary book world, however, YA (as it is most often abbreviated) really means *old children*. You know the age – when they seem too old to be called children, but both "teen" and "adolescent" seem awkward. Books with a YA designation (in most libraries there are endless arguments about whether certain titles should be shelved as children's books or YA) are variously intended for 12 and up or for 14 and up, depending more on theme, content and the age of the characters than on reading levels.

Many YA books (those discussed here, for instance) were intended by their authors to be read by high school students. The themes are specific to older adolescence. Unfortunately, those high school students who still read outside of the classroom often consider YA books beneath them, and so YA titles are read most often by junior high kids.

Also, unfortunately, parents tend to think that once their children are out of elementary school, reading should become a solitary activity. Not only does reading aloud disappear in most families, but few parents read the books their children are reading. Actually, during this period, when communication between parent and child is both more crucial and more difficult than ever, joint reading of good YA literature can serve as the basis for meaningful and important discussions. Reading aloud may still be possible. If not, consider reading some good books separately and talking about them together.

Ursula LeGuin's *Very Far Away from Anywhere Else* is a book about two highly gifted high school seniors. Each is an introvert, isolated from peers, and facing one of the most difficult moments in life – the need to decide, before stepping over the threshhold into adult life, exactly what that life should be. Owen, the narrator, is a math/science person whose goal in life is to go to MIT and do research. Natalie is a violist whose goal is to become one of the first really fine female composers.

Their story, which both is and is not a romance, deals with the difficult decision all gifted adolescents must confront – whether to commit themselves to their gifts, and in so doing accept the personal sacrifice such a commitment entails, or to give up those gifts in favor of "normal life." Should they focus on their own goals or try to fulfill the expectations of others? It is Natalie who has the foresight to confront the problem and the strength to choose her gift; Owen, for whom the decision is more difficult, is finally able to learn from her.

LeGuin offers in this book the best explanation for the adolescent need to ostracize those who are different I have ever seen:

> *... if We see You standing there alone by yourself, if you're lucky we'll ignore you. If you're not lucky we might throw rocks. Because we don't like people standing there with the wrong kind of patches on their bluejeans reminding us that we're each alone and none of us is safe.*

The gifted adolescent, so often different, so aware of being alone, must find the strength to build a life on this awareness. It's an important subject for discussion. ■

Stephanie Tolan, from Waterford, New York, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child.*

answers to their myriad questions; they tolerate and even thrive on clutter and apparent chaos; they gravitate toward older children and adults and share their interests and activities; they often insist on their own methods of accomplishing tasks instead of trying methods suggested by others. Their energy levels are likely to be extremely high (they may need less sleep than adults) and they tend to be *intense* about almost everything.

On formal tests capable of making distinctions far above norms (e.g., *Stanford-Binet L-M)* (Silverman & Kearney, 1989) these children usually score in the 155 - 200 IQ range. Leta Hollingworth (1942) asserted that there is an "optimal" IQ range (between 125 and 155). Above that, she suggested, automatic pressures come into play that work against productivity and social/emotional adjustment. These pressures come primarily from lack of fit.

LIFE IN THE FAMILY

In the years before school, families in which expectations are loose and flexible may adapt to the highly gifted child with relative ease. In these families a child's unusual accomplishments are noted, supported, and encouraged. Parents may be proud or they may be frightened (or a little of both) by their child's differences from others, but they do their best to cope with the child's unusual demands on their time and energies and to provide the resources the child seems to need.

Other families have more difficulty. They may have clear ideas about how children "should" behave and the highly gifted child refuses to conform to those ideas. Curiosity may be considered annoying, speaking or reading early may be thought an effort to get special attention, high energy levels may be dismissed as a lack of discipline and control. (Highly gifted children are sometimes misdiagnosed as suffering from attention deficit disorder.) Older siblings may have difficulty with a child who can do things they can't yet. The child's differences may also be threatening to extended family members or even to the parents themselves.

In some families parents and/or stepparents may disagree on major issues. One may revel in the child's accomplishments; the other may be threatened. One may rejoice in the gifted label; the other may refuse even to consider it. Even when they agree on the desirability of meeting the child's unusual needs, they may not agree on the best way to do that.

Few parents whose nine month old begins speaking in full sentences tell her she must stop and wait till other nine month olds catch up.

While some highly gifted children, then, move with relative ease and freedom through their earliest years, others encounter a painful and difficult problem of fit even within their own families. But it's safe to say that almost any family environment is more flexible than the environment highly gifted children confront when entering most American public (or private) schools.

LIFE IN SCHOOL

Few parents whose nine month old begins speaking in full sentences tell her she must stop and wait till other nine month olds catch up. They don't disallow words and force her to practice the babbling other nine months olds are doing as a preparation for speech. But this is precisely the approach most schools routinely take to precocious children, often with a solid sense that they are absolutely right to do it. Using the developmental schedules and norms on which our educational system is based, many educators believe that a child is harmed by too rapid a movement through developmental levels and that even worse harm is caused by any apparent skipping of developmental levels. They simply do not understand that some children have gone beyond those levels before entering school.

Most schools in America today are organized on the basis of age. Children are admitted to kindergarten at age five or first grade at age six, with rigid enforcement that puts children born 24 hours apart around the cut-off date in different grades. It is interesting that in many schools it is relatively easy to hold a child back on the basis of perceived immaturity, while it is extremely difficult to move one forward on the basis of unusual ability. Again there is a fear that harm will be done if a developmental level is somehow missed.

The question of age if crucial for parents and educators because it is in regard to age-related developmental standards that highly gifted children most clearly do not fit. ***How old is the highly gifted child?***

In terms of development chronological age may be the least relevant piece of information to consider. Kate, with an IQ score of 170, may be six, but she has a "mental age" of ten and a half. If that meant that Kate had a ten year old's mind in a six year old's body, the problem, though real, would be relatively simple to handle. Unfortunately, Kate, like every highly gifted child, is an amalgam of many developmental ages. She may be six while riding a bike, thirteen while playing the piano or chess, nine while debating rules, eight while choosing hobbies and books, five (or three) when asked to sit still. How can such a child be expected to fit into a classroom designed around norms for six year olds?

Consider the case of Joshua, newly enrolled in the first grade. He reads on a

(Continued on next page)

twelfth grade level, though his comprehension is "only" at the seventh grade. He does multiplication and division with ease, understands fractions and decimals, but dislikes working pages of math problems. He collects baseball cards and fossils, his favorite subject for study at home is astronomy, his favorite game is poker. Though he can focus his attention for hours on a subject of real interest, he is unable to sit still when bored. He has difficulty remembering to raise his hand when he has something to say, he tends to hit other children when frustrated or angry and he cries easily. He loses papers, books, pencils, hats and jackets, he forgets to bring his lunch, he misses hearing announcements made in class and consistently fails to follow directions, preferring to do things his own way.

> ***It is interesting that in many schools it is relatively easy to hold a child back on the basis of perceived immaturity, while it is extremely difficult to move one forward on the basis of unusual ability.***

If we were to provide Joshua with a teacher who understands that he is highly gifted and wants to help him, and a school in which flexibility is encouraged, a variety of problems would still be difficult to solve. He could be put in a high level reading group – with sixth graders perhaps – to provide the necessary challenge to his ability to read. However, there are real and serious questions about whether a six year old is ready, emotionally and in terms of life experience, to understand novels and other reading matter meant for eleven year olds.

It isn't such a problem to use subject-matter acceleration for math, so he could be put with a class of fourth or fifth graders for math. However, his tendency to cry when upset or frustrated, and his physical aggressiveness, will almost certainly cause him trouble with older classmates. Sensitive counseling, both for Joshua and for the older students, is necessary to avoid social/emotional difficulties. Further, his ability to write (or print) is unlikely to meet the demands of higher level work, and his messiness and lack of organization will work against his completing that work and turning it in on time and in acceptable condition.

In spite of acceleration in specific subject areas, Joshua will be in class with his age mates part of the time, and, given his intense demand for intellectual stimulation, he will probably find himself bored a good part of that time. Being unable to sit still when bored, he is likely to disrupt class at such times, and the teacher must be ready not only to understand his problem, but to provide him with an activity of sufficient challenge to focus his attention (while she manages the rest of the class of six year olds).

On the playground, Joshua will have other difficulties. He is likely to enjoy some of the rough-and-tumble games his classmates play, so if he is allowed to join those games, he may have fun with his classmates. However, he will probably play even those games differently. Six year olds tend to play with each other for the activity and interaction of it, caring little about rules. Joshua, more like a ten year old, cares very much. He will feel that the others are unfair and unreasonable if they break or disregard the rules; they, on the other hand, will quickly learn to shut him out of their games if he insists on rigid adherence to the rules.

If he is able to play with his classmates successfully in games of their choosing, Joshua will probably expect them to take turns and play games of his choosing. But since his favorite games are the complex games of older children and even adults, his classmates won't find the games interesting or even understandable. It will be hard for him to see that it is his games that his classmates reject, not himself.

If he tries to join older children playing more complex games *at school*, where age differences are so clearly delineated and so constantly reinforced, he is likely to be rebuffed, unless an effort is made by adults to smooth the way for him. (It's important to note that older children often willingly accept a younger child into their activities if the younger child is *good at them*. But he must be given a chance to show his ability.)

In considering Joshua's school problems we've given him a positive environment, a school that is willing to deal with him as a separate individual with unusual needs. Even then, those needs are not easy to meet. But in many schools no such flexibility exists. Norms and expectations give not an inch. In such an environment a child like Joshua is unlikely to be considered bright, let alone "highly gifted." Many of the very characteristics of unusual intelligence work against recognition in a hostile or uninformed environment.

Messiness and disorganization are in many (possibly most) highly gifted children an unchangeable reality of brain organization, as strong as right or left-handedness. But these traits are usually regarded as "fixable" in young children. (And definitely in need of fixing!) The child who cannot remember to hand in homework, who loses pencils and books, who can't keep track of assignments or even remember to bring his lunch, is labeled "immature." Far from being accelerated, such a child may face recommendations that he be held back.

Children who can already do what the school is attempting to teach frequently do the repetitive learning tasks assigned in class very poorly. Sometimes out of boredom or anger, they simply refuse. When they *do* attempt to do the work requested, because

(Continued on next page)

their minds are light-years ahead of their hands, they have difficulty making their handwriting neat and legible. Worse, they often tone down their ideas and thoughts to simple, easy to write sentences. The child who thinks, "The golden lion crept up on the unsuspecting antelope" may write, "The cat ate the rat." Teachers can't assess unexpressed thoughts.

Though some children may compute as accurately as calculators, gifted children who are extremely precocious with math concepts often have difficulty with computation. Long lists of problems lack any intellectual interest so are done haphazardly at best.

Bored by nearly everything that goes on in school, these children may disrupt class purposely or merely because they can't keep still when their minds are unoccupied. Sometimes, attempting to create some interest, they use that innate sense of humor to clown and joke, at the expense of other children, the teacher, or themselves. Some children become so angry at the thwarting of their natural abilities and their desire to learn, that they become openly rebellious. Others withdraw into a world of fantasy or, if allowed to read, into the many worlds of books.

Gifted children are often expected, in our culture, to "earn" the right to the special attention they need. Highly gifted children have enormous difficulty doing that. They are often considered academically inept, socially immature or even antisocial, and personally silly or withdrawn or hostile. All of this comes from the basic problem – they don't fit.

INDIVIDUAL SOLUTIONS

How can this problem be addressed? The first step is to realize fully that being highly gifted means that the child is not normal and cannot be adequately served using normal methods. Parents and schools must insist on recognition of the special needs of children not only at the lower ends of the intelligence scale, but on the higher ends as well. The answers need not be costly, though they are complicated. They must be based on an understanding that the highly gifted child *must be treated as an individual*. The highly gifted are rare enough that schools don't need to worry that treating each one separately will result in the demand that hundreds of children be given such individual attention.

You cannot clothe a size 6x human being off the racks in a regular department store, even one with a big-and-tall shop that carries sizes up to 3x, no matter how many other people can be fitted there. If individual tailoring is not possible, the very least that must be provided is extreme alteration.

Acceleration (grade-skipping) may be helpful, particularly if it is relatively radical acceleration that will take the child into an environment with reasonably appropriate intellectual challenge and classmates who are enough older that they are not too seriously threatened by the presence of a younger child. Radical acceleration in early grades may need technological support – the child may need to use a typewriter or recorder or even someone to take notes for her – to make up for lack of handwriting skills. Grade-skipping is not ideal, but it is sometimes the only alternative to age-grade lock-step rigidity. (And it's cheap!)

Acceleration by subject area is more useful, though scheduling problems and even transportation problems may work against it. If a child can be seen as many ages, then she can be placed with her actual peers for most of her activities – chronological age mates for gym, perhaps, or art, children of different ages and grade levels for academic subjects.

Homeschooling is, for some highly gifted children, a nearly ideal solution. Work can be tailored entirely to the child's abilities and interests. Homeschooling has become far more common in recent [illegible]rs (Kearney, 1989) and many districts that used to threaten jail for parents who kept children out of school now cooperate with homeschooling families. This option requires enormous sacrifice from parents, but some families consider it necessary.

SOCIALIZATION

It may be that socialization presents the greatest problem for highly gifted children regardless of school placement. Here and there around the country there are support groups for parents and children, but those are still very rare. In most parts of the country, highly gifted children feel themselves to be alone, lost in a no man's land between childhood and adulthood, fitting nowhere. Like E.T., they wish to go home, to be with others like themselves. Unlike E.T., they already are at home, so there is no place to go. While they may be comfortable with adults, they are not adults, and they long to find children with whom they can share the interests, passions, philosophies, thoughts, gripes, joys, griefs and ecstacies that for most of their lives must be kept hidden.

The "talent searches" that are proliferating on college campuses[1], though they don't help very young highly gifted children, hold out a promise of some belonging to children between 10 and 13 (12 or 13 is the standard age for participation). Those who score high enough on the SAT tests may attend classes at one of the sponsoring universities during the summer. There, surrounded by several hundred other highly gifted children, they become, for a brief time (usually three to three and a half weeks), normal. It is an experience most of them value for the rest of their lives – a time during which they can be themselves. They take appropriately challenging classes, some for college credit, but most agree *(Continued on next page)*

GUARDING THE GIFTED CHILD Continued from page 1

child. She can be anything she wants to be!" From such glorifications, parents may begin to perceive their gifted children as paragons of virtue. One mother was told that her son tested in the top 1%. She said that this event was the beginning of disaster for her family because she and her husband then imposed all the expectations of what a "top 1%" child should be. In their recovery process, Mom became a gifted program coordinator! We need to avoid a gifted/nongifted dichotomy, and focus, instead, on the particular abilities, sensitivities, personality, temperament and interests of our children. Our goal is to appreciate how these children's needs are different, not just the way they demonstrate achievement.

"BUT IT'S NOT NORMAL"

Sometimes a parent will plead, "If you don't label him 'gifted,' then he may still have a chance to be normal!" We need to allow our children **not** to be normal. We all have our own perceptions of what it means to be normal, primarily determined by how we, ourselves, were raised. Many of our ideas of "normal" become our "shoulds" – the myths we live by. One myth is the directive that we should do our "best" at all times. As parents, we may inadvertently give our children contradictory messages: "Do your best" and "Fit in" (which translates, "Be less than your best").

Would you expect children who are well into the retarded range to be like average children except for their achievement in academic subjects? We lovingly allow differences in every aspect of retarded children's social, emotional, and intellectual development, yet we coax our exceptionally gifted children to fit in, to be normal. It is important to appreciate our children's differences if we want them to appreciate themselves.

I ALWAYS THOUGHT THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME

The most prevalent response I hear from people who have read our book, *Guiding the Gifted Child* (Webb, Meckstroth & Tolan, 1982) is something like, "I read that book for my child, but I saw myself on those pages. Now I know why I never seemed to fit in. I always thought there was something wrong with me. Now I know I was gifted too. I'm going back and putting together the puzzle pieces of my life in a different way."

As an individual's intelligence deviates from the norm, so does the possibility for isolation and misunderstanding. Do you remember how difficult it was for you to get people to take you seriously when you were a child? We never seem to outgrow the pain of being misunderstood in childhood. But our own experiences sensitize us to the frustrations of our children, and enable us to support our children's exceptional ideals, heightened emotional responses, and fanciful imaginations.

To appreciate some of the elusive, immeasurable qualities of giftedness in ourselves and in our children requires redefining certain "erratic" behaviors as strengths. Sometimes when we think that a person is "too much" of something, we are actually observing a realm of giftedness. Some of these qualities can be understood within the context of Dabrowski's "overexcitabilities": intellectual, emotional, imaginational, sensual and psychomotor (Piechowski, 1979). We recognize that people who love theories, who close out the world in deep concentration, who read constantly, who stick with a problem until it is solved, and who continually ask, "Why?" are **intellectually gifted.** But that is only one type of giftedness.

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from page 9)

that the greatest benefit is that sense of fitting in – finally (Higham & Buescher, 1987). These programs are short-term and expensive (financial aid may be available, particularly for minorities) but their social, emotional and educational value is inestimable.

Parents and educators need to look very closely at the needs of the highly gifted child, accept that those needs are far outside the norm, and find ways to begin meeting them. As a country *we have never done this*. Here and there such a child survives and prospers. How many we have lost we will never know. What they could *be*, what they could do – for themselves, for us, for a troubled planet – if they were accepted for who they are, no matter how different, and nourished from the beginning, we have yet to find out. If these children don't fit our culture, we must begin changing that culture to accommodate them. ■

NOTES

[1] Based on the program begun at Johns Hopkins University, now called the Center for Talented Youth (CTY).

REFERENCES

Higham, S., & Buescher, T.M. (1987). What young gifted adolescents understand about feeling different. In T.M. Buescher (Ed.), *Understanding gifted and talented adolescents* (pp. 26-30). Evanston, IL: The Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University.

Hollingworth, L.S. (1942). *Children above 180 IQ Stanford-Binet.* Yonkers-on-Hudson, NY: World Book.

Kearney, K. (1989). Homeschooling gifted children. *Understanding Our Gifted, 1*(3), 1, 12-13, 15-16.

Silverman, L.K., & Kearney, K. (1989). Parents of the extraordinarily gifted. *Advanced Development, 1*, 41-56.

Stephanie Tolan, from Waterford, New York, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child.*

According to Dabrowski's theory, people who are thought of as too sensitive, too empathic, too perfectionistic, too intense, may be considered **emotionally gifted**. Individuals with **sensual giftedness** have heightened experiences of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling or touching and crave those experiences. Tears may come to their eyes when they hear "Salome" or see a magnificent sunset. They may just love the smell of Crayolas. Those who are highly active, compulsive talkers, explode with exuberance, exhaust everyone with their energy are **psychomotorically gifted**. Then there are those who are **imaginationally gifted**. They love to consider "What if...?" They live in metaphors. They create their world with their imaginations and walk in! There is a gossamer line where their fantasies begin and the concrete world ends. (By now you may recognize dimensions of yourself that you had not previously appreciated.)

CRISIS CUBED

Parents of gifted children tend to be acutely sensitive and aware, and these qualities intensify our relationships with our children. The effects of life situations, feelings, and ideas become magnified in the gifted family. It is as if there is a geometric progression of intensity with each family member involved. Sharon gets upset at being called "teacher's pet"; Mom tries to help, and ends up reliving her own painful experiences; Dad tries to put a lid on the emotions, "What's the big deal?" and pretty soon the situation becomes "Crisis Cubed."

ENMESHED RELATIONSHIPS

Maintaining integrity in a gifted parent/child relationship requires a delicate balance. It is our identification with our children that enables us to become safe harbors for their thoughts and feelings. We **can** understand because we've been there. But this identification can also lead to the blurring of boundaries between ourselves and our children. There is the potential danger of creating enmeshed relationships in which we live our lives vicariously through our children, we exist only to serve their needs, or they feel they must meet all of our emotional needs. We can become vulnerable to seeing our children as manifestations of ourselves, and forget that they are individuals who are separate from us.

Children are powerfully affected by their parents' expectations. It does not escape astute children that they may be valued for ways they make us look good. Children tell me, "My successes belong to my parents; my mistakes belong to me." We need to be aware of ways we might inadvertently usurp our children's satisfaction and pride. We need to examine objectively what we reinforce in our children and what we choose to ignore. Do we subtly nudge our children to achieve, believe, or behave in ways that will help us to fulfill our own dreams at the expense of theirs?

We naturally tend to perpetuate what we value – what works for us – and impose this on our children. Sometimes (oh, so subtly) we annihilate or discount positive qualities in our children that do not reflect our own values. For example, you may float away on Baroque music, but your son is into Heavy Metal and wants more amps. How enthusiastic can you get? You ladle soup at the shelter for the homeless and your daughter collects baseball cards. Do you resent that she's wasting her time? You spend hours in meditation trying to create a calm inner space for yourself; your son explodes because his equation did not come out right. Can you empathize with him? You're the debate team coach; your daughter devotes herself to cheerleading. How tempting is it to let her know she is acting like an airhead and should be making her Freshman year more worthwhile? Can you recognize that your children's choices enable them to discover their own abilities and create their own priorities? Can you allow your children to be different from you?

So many gifted adults have said to me, "I've spent my whole life facilitating other people's priorities." "I've lived a lie." "I tried to please everybody but me." Similarly, when children are not the authors of their own lives, but perform to achieve what other people value, they tend to grow up feeling these feelings and resenting the parents who molded them.

There are ways you can encourage your children to believe in themselves – ways to say, "I like you to be YOU." A place to start is by examining your own expectations. Are you replaying vestiges of your own childhood, trying to fit your child into what worked for you and for your family? Do you need your child to make you look like a good parent? Our children's freedom to express themselves is a precious resource and we need to appreciate what they can teach us.

DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S SELF ESTEEM

One of the most effective methods of building our children's self esteem is by listening to them. We develop trust in ourselves when someone really listens to us. Unfortunately, our gifted children often have a difficult time being understood in the world. We see them adjusting their thoughts and the way they express themselves so that they will fit in with others. We need to help them accept that many people **cannot** understand their feelings and ideas, but that there are others in the world who **can** understand. If they feel heard and understood by us, their parents, this lays the foundation of trust that there will be others who understand them as well.

(Continued on next page)

GUARDING THE GIFTED CHILD Continued from page 12

Another element in our children's self esteem is their sense of autonomy. We can encourage autonomy by giving our children choices from the time they are very young. Allowing our children to make choices within tolerable limits, and then allowing them to experience the consequences of their decisions teaches them responsibility and autonomy.

You can help your children explore possibilities and anticipate consequences of their choices by using the following problem solving process:

Find the facts: Explore the situation.

Define the problem: What would I like to be different?

Brainstorm alternatives: In what ways might I make that happen?

Evaluate consequences: How might this work for me and against me?

Find acceptance: How might I integrate this change?

Make a plan: I will do what by when?

Do it!

Re-evaluate: What did I learn? How did it help? What might I try next time?

Another tool to build your children's self esteem is modeling. In my November, 1988 column in *Understanding Our Gifted*, I provided some ideas for modeling self esteem, autonomy and giving children the message that it is good to grow up. If you use the problem solving method outlined above in your own life circumstances, and think through the process out loud, you show your children its effectiveness.

As difficult as it may be, we need to allow our children to learn from their own experiences. Children develop character through challenges and overcoming difficulties. If we were content all the time, we would not grow in our awareness and abilities. Sometimes we can be more to our children by doing **less** for them.

I will conclude this essay with a passionate plea for individual integrity by Carl Jung (1957, pp. 17-18):

> *Hence it is not the universal and the regular that characterize the individual but rather the unique. He is not to be understood as a recurrent unit but as something unique and singular which in the last analysis can neither be known nor compared with anything else.* ■

REFERENCES

Jung, C. G. (1957). *The undiscovered self.* Boston: Little, Brown.

Meckstroth, E. (1988). It's good to grow up. *Understanding Our Gifted, 1*(2), 4.

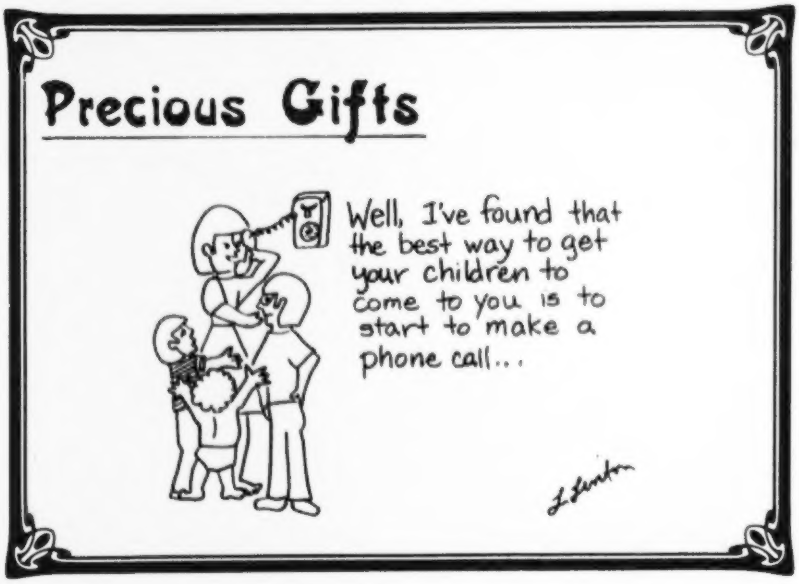
Piechowski, M. M. (1979). Developmental potential. In N. Colangelo & R. Zaffrann (Eds.), *New voices in counseling the gifted* (pp. 25-57). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Webb, J. T., Meckstroth, E. A., & Tolan, S. T. (1983). *Guiding the gifted child.* Columbus, OH: Ohio Psychology.

Elizabeth Meckstroth is a therapist and consultant in Dayton, Ohio and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child.*

Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts.
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit,
    not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.
You are the bows from which you children as living arrows are sent forth.
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,
    and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;
For even as he loves the arrow that flies,
    so He loves also the bow that is stable.

*from **The Prophet**, by Kahlil Gibran*


Precious Gifts
Well, I've found that the best way to get your children to come to you is to start to make a phone call...

THE HIGHLY GIFTED

The Early College Option (Part II)

In the last issue we met Nicole and James, two highly gifted students who, for different reasons, chose to enter college early..In this issue, we will meet two other young college entrants, and consider additional ways the early college experience can enhance the educational program of the highly gifted.

-Not yet ten years old, Veronica had successfully completed nine college credits as part of her home education program. She took the placement test offered by her college and qualified for full-time enrollment in a degree program, becoming one of the nation's youngest full-time college students.

-Sara was the state's highest-scoring student in the Johns Hopkins Talent Search. As part of her state award, she was offered a one-course scholarship at a local college. She concurrently enrolled in junior high and in the local college that fall.

The experiences of Veronica and Sara illustrate other ways the early college option may be used.

Additional reasons to consider early college entrance

1. *Early college entrance may be an option in districts which have no school programs for highly gifted students, or when it is the best opportunity for the student to receive an appropriate education.* Veronica found herself in this situation. Her school did not even have a program for moderately gifted students. Two grade skips and an individualized homeschooling program still did not meet her needs. College provided the educational challenge she needed, and her parents made sure she had plenty of opportunities through church, community, and neighborhood groups to socialize with children her own chronological age.

2. *Early college coursework can be considered as part of an individualized educational plan for a highly gifted student.* Sara's SAT scores were higher than most college-bound seniors. The flexibility of Sara's educational plan meant that she was concurrently enrolled in junior high, high school, and college. Such flexibility on the part of Sara's school district enabled her to use college coursework as part of a total plan of appropriate instruction.

3. *Early college entrance may sometimes be a solution for highly gifted, "old-in-grade" students.* In almost all states, kindergarten or first-grade admission is governed solely by chronological age rather than academic or developmental readiness. No matter how gifted the child, if his birthday is even a day past the cut-off date for school entrance, he will probably not be permitted to enter school. Coupled with this is a growing trend in education today that encourages parents of children with summer or fall birthdays to consider keeping their children out of school an extra year, or to enroll them in a "pre-kindergarten" program rather than the regular kindergarten. Highly gifted children in either of these situations may discover that, by eighth grade, they are not only the oldest in the class but very much in need of some form of acceleration. During high school years, as career preparation becomes a consideration, they will become aware of the amount of time it takes to prepare to become a doctor, lawyer, physicist, mathematician, or research scientist. Saving a year or more of time through some form of early college entrance not only challenges their abilities and alleviates boredom in the present, but may well provide them with the crucial gift of an extra year or two of time to make a lasting creative contribution in their chosen field.

Although early college entrance is not appropriate for all highly gifted children, it should be seriously considered as one of many possible options to meet the educational needs of highly gifted children. To be successful as an educational strategy, *it is absolutely crucial that the student herself be "eager to move ahead educationally".* (Stanley, 1978, p. 63) When that is the case,

> *– a vast amount of... evidence accumulated for more than half a century shows that highly able youths who want to quicken their educational pace in a number of ways would be well advised to break the lockstep – there is no substantial evidence to the contrary. The oft-sounded fears that educational acceleration will hurt the social and emotional development of intellectually highly talented youths – who want to move ahead faster than their agemates – are groundless. On the contrary, frustrating the natural pace of highly apt students can cause serious academic and emotional damage. (Stanley, 1978, p. 3)*

In the next issue, we will present specific suggestions for the highly gifted student who is considering early college attendance, including a discussion of such issues as credits, financial aid, placement tests, legalities, and family considerations. ■

REFERENCE

Stanley, J.S. (1978). Educational non-acceleration: An international tragedy, *G/C/T*, *1*(3), 2-5, 53-57, 60-63.

Kathi Kearney is Director of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in Auburn, Maine, a resource teacher, and editor of *Highly Gifted Children.*

Thomas M. Buescher

ADOLESCENT PASSAGES

Building Relationships Beyond the Family
Part I

Learning to be Separate

Adolescence is not an individual, isolated journey for anyone. For gifted and talented boys and girls on the grand stage of adolescence, it quickly becomes a challenging production with multiple scripts, numerous scenes, and more than a good deal of disagreeing agents, producers, and directors! While some of the most formidable changes facing talented adolescents are internal or intrapsychic, those most difficult to understand and adjust to tend to be *relational;* they extend beyond the reach of young people themselves, creating space for both conflict and passion in later years (Buescher, in press).

In this column, spanning the next three issues, we will explore some of the complications exceptional students encounter as they begin to build relationships beyond their families of origin. Some of these issues are linked to matters of gradually separating from parents and siblings in a process called *individuation* – central to adolescence. Others are integral to forming new relationships of intimacy and openness with peers enroute to young adulthood. This first part describes the process of beginning to see oneself as different and unique within the family.

Becoming an Individual

Finding out how one is *different* from parents, siblings, peers, and close friends is a critical adolescent task that must be successfully mastered before mature adult relationships can evolve. While the process of learning how to view oneself as being "separate but still connected" to other family members is a common dilemma for all adolescents, many gifted and talented young people seem to find it even more troublesome. Why does this seem to be true for adolescents who apparently showed earlier signs of being precociously independent?

Individuation, in other words, becoming one's own person, begins in early childhood. Parents easily remember that one of their children's earliest motivations was to use newly discovered legs to walk away, alone, touching and grabbing everything in sight, quickly moving beyond the reach of their mom or dad's extended hands. As parents they felt pride and elation at this progress until, at 18 or 20 months, their able young explorers began to cower, even panic, at moments of independence. They found their children avoiding isolation and clinging to them desperately in the face of new experiences. Yet when later soothed and reassured, newly armed with useful language and intense curiosity, these very same two-year-olds became strikingly independent once again, felt safe beyond their parents' line of sight, and acted almost selfishly on their own wishes. This special new interdependent relationship, child to parent, buoys the family past the inevitable "No's" of the terrible two's and into the creative years of early childhood.

In early adolescence, a similar pattern of attachment, separation, and regression normally accompanies the final push to become an individual. For some young people, this return to a hesitant and child-like way of behaving is simply a safe 'way station' for consolidating the experiences of childhood while building some momentum for shedding family dependencies in the later adolescent years.

Life Without the 'Old' Family

It is easy to see why this typical developmental process could be more uncomfortable and difficult for those adolescents who have exceptional abilities. While it might be true that they have become accustomed to acting quite independently from their parents and siblings throughout childhood, they are also aware that a great deal of what they have accomplished is tightly meshed with the close support and cooperation provided by their families, particularly their parents. Often the normal amount of 'panic' preceding the eventual separation and individuation of later adolescence can become more intense, difficult to accept, or even worse, completely denied as happening at all. Left without strategies to accept or adjust to the growing sense of separation they feel within themselves, some highly talented adolescents act unproductively in an attempt to slow down their differentiation within the family and postpone their attainment of independence. ■

NEXT ISSUE: What Helps Talented Teens To Separate?

REFERENCES

Buescher, T. (In Press). Between identification and self discovery: Challenges facing talented adolescents. In N. Colangelo and G. Davis, Eds., *Handbook of Gifted Education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Thomas M. Buescher, Ph.D., is a Research Scholar, Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University, and editor of *Understanding Gifted and Talented Adolescents.*

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS:
The Young Gifted Child

Abstract Thought and Child's Play

Extraordinary capacity for abstract thought has long been recognized as an indicator of giftedness (Seagoe, 1975). Such ability is generally acknowledged as fundamental to academic achievement. Not so generally acknowledged, however, is the role of abstract thought in shaping emotional reactions and social relationships for gifted children.

Gifted children may find the play of their agemates dull or puzzling because it lacks the abstract context naturally a part of their own play (Hollingworth, 1942). Consider three-year-old Sammy, who reported to his mother that his nursery school classmates had played "Cops and Robbers" while he watched from the sidelines. Thinking she would encourage Sammy to be more outgoing, his mother responded "But you could have played, too! Why didn't you just join in the game?" Sammy replied "I couldn't because I didn't know who were the good guys and who were the bad guys."

Unlike the other three year olds who enjoyed the "cops and robbers" chase simply for physical activity and social interaction, Sammy required congruence between abstract and concrete aspects of the game. Thus, he could not enjoy the chase unless the "story line" was clearly delineated and the "good" and "bad" characters well-defined. This same child, at two, had tearfully pressed his mother for an explanation of *why* some of the other children in his playgroup grabbed toys away from him. A simple affirmation that turn-taking and sharing were desirable was not enough for him. Puzzled and hurt by other childrens' actions, Sammy was reaching toward some form of abstract understanding. He needed to know *why* they had acted as they had.

How can we help children like Sammy comprehend the potentially puzzling world of their agemates and develop rewarding social connections? Starting with them at an early age, parents and teachers can help gifted children understand that they have an ability to perceive situational subtleties that most children cannot. All children may not like (or be able) to play the same way, and as gifted children grow older, they need to become adept at having different friends for different needs. In addition, efforts must persist toward helping gifted children establish true peer relationships. Their most fulfilling friendships are likely to emerge from relationships with other gifted children who share delight in more complex play – who, quite simply, enjoy doing the same things and thinking along the same lines (O'Shea, 1962).

Some shared activities can successfully accommodate children of varying abstract ability levels. Sammy, at seven, participated in Little League sports and enjoyed being on a team and giving it his best. Externally, his efforts were focused on acquiring the same physical and team skills that the other children worked towards. Internally, however, his experience was quite different from that of his teammates. He saw the game through a sophisticated lens of batting averages, on-base percentages, and other concepts which aided his interpretation of it.

In conclusion, a propensity for abstract thought influences not only academic achievement, but also emotional and social experience. It is a factor which must constantly be considered if we seek to understand the world of the gifted child. ■

REFERENCES

Hollingworth, L. (1942). *Children above 180 IQ, Stanford-Binet: Origin and development*. Yonkers, NY: World Book.

O'Shea, H. (1960). Friendship and the intellectually gifted child. *Exceptional Children*, *26*(6), 327-335.

Martha Morelock, is a Doctoral Student in Child Study at the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study, Tufts University

How glorious it is — and also how painful — to be an exception.

Alfred de Musset

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY

Creative Voyager

Creative Ventures And Encounters

Jerry Flack
Tour Guide

On this journey we travel through time and space to London, circa 1889. The sounds of horses' hooves reverberate on cobblestone streets. The foggy atmosphere is redolent of mystery and intrigue. The hansom stops and the driver announces "221B Baker Street." We exit, climb the steps, and ring the door chime. A kindly Mrs. Hudson welcomes us and ushers us up an open staircase and into the sitting room of the world's greatest consulting detective. A tall, angular man wastes little time with introductions. "Come quickly. We must be off. Dr. Watson will join us momentarily. Quick now, the game's afoot!" We rush off in hot pursuit of the nefarious Professor Moriarty.

Add a dash of mystery to the lives of the creative and gifted young people you know this summer. The mystery genre not only allows young readers grand adventures as they travel with Sherlock Holmes, Joe and Frank Hardy, Encyclopedia Brown, Nancy Drew, Cam Jansen, and a host of other sleuths; mysteries also offer readers excellent opportunities to use their critical thinking and creative problem solving skills.

Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories should be a staple in every youth's independent reading program. The Newbery Award--winning *The Westing Game* (Raskin, 1978) and *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (Konigsburg, 1967) both offer somewhat younger readers excellent entrees to the mystery genre. Even the youngest readers will be challenged and delighted by the picture book mystery *Miss Nelson Is Missing!* (Montgomery, 1988). The "Choose Your Own Adventure" series engages young readers in determining the outcome of several mysteries. Lawrence Treat's (1980) *Crime and Puzzlement* picture mysteries also provide enjoyable mental stimulation. First-rate mysteries for the gifted may be found in mystery bookstores, and in the mystery section of children's bookstores; local libraries may provide a summer reading list of excellent mysteries.

Many creative ventures can stem from the reading of mysteries. First, two cautionary thoughts. After a challenging ten months of schoolwork, precocious youths may need a change of pace which includes stress-free reading. Also ask yourself as a parent or a teacher: Would I love to read if I had to write a critique or create a project for every book I ever read? Don't be afraid to allow a gifted child to simply enjoy a good mystery.

When the gifted child *is ready* to move beyond the sheer enjoyment mysteries offer, the following creative prompts may serve to enhance summer reading while simultaneously developing thinking, writing, and art skills.

1. *Read a mystery* half way through. Practice the skills of a good sleuth. In your detective's diary list all the suspects, their motives, and alibis. From the evidence provided, deduce the identity of the guilty. Finish the book. What's your sleuthing I.Q.? If you failed to find the guilty, where did your own reasoning fail you?
2. *Create a list of careers* in which professionals emulate Sherlock Holmes. For example, do not archaeologists and cancer researchers also collect evidence and use it to try to solve enigmas and dilemmas?

3. A young California man started his own successful business modeled after Conan Doyle's famous protagonist. In *Sherlock Bones: Tracer of Missing Pets*, John Keane (1979) recounts his exploits as the nation's first and only pet detective. *What new business might you create* in which you are a sleuth for hire? Choose a name and logo, and design a business card for your new business. Write an imaginative account of your first case.

4. A terrible fire has occurred in the home of mystery writer Veronica Van Snoop and all that remains of her whodunit works-in-progress are a few charred scraps of paper. Please help Lady Van Snoop *reconstruct mystery stories from these smoky remnants:*

   ...no weapon, no clues, no body, yet she knew a crime had been committed.

   ...the light of the moon silhouetted the burglar as he...

   He walked aimlessly down the beach, muttering to no one in particular, "I just don't understand, I just don't understand...Who could have taken it?"

5. *Plan a mystery* for the whole family to solve. Select a crime to "perpetrate" (e.g., hide Dad's shoes). Create a series of clues, write them on slips of paper and hide them throughout the house. Then, at dinner time, announce that something is missing and that the family sleuths must determine what is missing and where it has been stashed by the "crook."

6. Using a game like CLUE as a model, *create an original board game* for the family to play which is based on one of your favorite mysteries.

7. Camp Conundrum will never be the same again. Nancy Drew, Encyclopedia Brown, Harriet the Spy, Cam Jansen, Joe and Frank Hardy, and Trixie Belden are all spending the summer at C.C. together. *Write a story* about the skulduggery these youthful sleuths uncover.

8. *Become a research sleuth*. Learn about the detection of fakes and forgeries, fingerprinting, tracking crooks, and a host of detection procedures used by detectives, and record the facts in your detective diary. The Usborne, *Spy Guides (Thompson & Hindley, 1978), and Knowhow Book of Detection* (Hindley & Rumbelow, 1978) are especially good resources.

Let us finish this creative excursion with a dreadful pun. One day Dr. Watson discovered Holmes *sans* shoes and socks and playing with his toes. Puzzled, Watson asked S.H. what on earth he was doing, and the great detective replied: "Hurry, take off your shoes and socks and join me. Quick, Watson, the foot's a game." ■

REFERENCES

Adler, D. (1984). *Cam Jansen and the mystery of the monster movie*. New York: Dell Yearling.

Allard, H. & J. Marshall, (1977). *Miss Nelson is missing!* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Fitzhugh, L. (1964). *Harriet the spy*. New York: Harper & Row.

Hindley, J. & D. Rumbelow (1978). *The knowhow book of detection*. Tulsa, OK: EDC.

Keane, John (1979). *Sherlock Bones: Tracer of missing pets*. Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott.

Konigsburg, E.L. (1967). *From the mixed-up files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. New York: Atheneum.

Montgomery, R. (1988). *The Mona Lisa is missing*. New York: Bantam Books. (One of many "Choose Your Own Adventure" books.)

Raskin, E. (1978). *The westing game*. New York: Avon Books.

Sobol, D.J. (1963). *Encyclopedia Brown: Boy detective*. New York: Thomas Nelson.

Thompson, R. & J. Hindley. *The good spy guide: Tracking & trailing*. Tulsa, OK: EDC.

Treat, L. (1980). *Crime and puzzlement*. Boston, MA: David R. Godine.

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Gifted Education at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and editor of *G/T News*.

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

There's still time to order while supplies last!

☐ **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS**	**VOL 1 - ISSUE 1**
☐ **EARLY DEVELOPMENT**	**VOL 1 - ISSUE 2**
☐ **HIGHLY GIFTED**	**VOL 1 - ISSUE 3**
☐ **LEARNING STYLES**	**VOL 1 - ISSUE 4**

Send $6.50 per issue (prepaid) to: Snowpeak Publishing, Inc.
P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122 or call (303) 798-0986.

☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD

NAME ____________________

Card# ____________________

ADDRESS ____________________

Expiration Date ____________

CITY __________ STATE ______ ZIP ______

____
Signature

ANTENNA . . . .

Current Developments in Gifted Education

My colleague Frank Rainey, St. Vrain School District, Colorado, has made a profound observation: "Gifted education is a laboratory for educational change." Innovative teaching strategies, creativity, critical thinking skills, interdisciplinary approaches, theories of intelligence – all have been piloted, developed and supported within the field of gifted education. And these techniques have been found to be appropriate to use in *all* areas of education.

Yet gifted education continues to be an "add-on" in school curriculum. It is the last to be incorporated into the curriculum and the first to be cut when the budget is low. Although gifted education is indeed a proving ground for all education – a lab for innovation, alternatives, excellence – it is not regarded as such in the general education arena.

"Are educators of the gifted really just advocating an excellent educational system that would benefit all children?" asks Sally Reis (1989, p.405.). My answer is yes. Teaching methods and resources that effectively serve the needs of high ability children can be utilized for all students. Individualization and process-oriented curriculum can work for all, provided that teachers are aware of the varying learning styles and advanced capabilities of gifted students.

Gifted education reflects some of the characteristics of the children it serves: intensity, sensitivity, curiosity. It is intense in its drive to stretch curriculum both horizontally and vertically in order to challenge creative young minds. It is sensitive to new theories of growth and development and current research on intelligence and learning styles. It is curious as to how state-of-the-art techniques in individualized curriculum can be adapted to the classroom.

Gifted children are frustrated with a system that often limits their quest for knowledge and squelches their curiosity. Similarly, educators of the gifted and talented experience frustration as they challenge the mediocrity of traditional education. The children seem to hear a "different drummer." Gifted education provides an amphitheater for that drummer to be heard.

Gifted students are frequently not risk takers. They are perfectionistic and afraid that they may fail. However, those who work with and for gifted students cannot be afraid to take a risk. We must work together in Rainey's laboratory to provide educational change for children of all abilities. Every child must have the opportunity to reach his or her potential. The risk is worth it.

Who knows? As we in gifted education develop educational practices that will enhance all learners, we may find a young Albert Einstein, Martin Luther King, or Christa McAuliffe tucked away in a regular classroom waiting for our theories to be implemented. ■

REFERENCE

Reis, S.M. (1989). Reflections on policy affecting the education of gifted and talented students. *American Psychologist, 44*(2), 399-408.

Dorothy Knopper is State Consultant on the Gifted, Colorado Department of Education and "Open Space" columnist for *Roeper Review*.

ADVANCED
DEVELOPMENT
A Journal on Adult Giftedness

ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT JOURNAL: *A Journal on Adult Giftedness*

Gifted children usually have gifted parents. If you are wondering about your own giftedness, subscribe to **Advanced Development: *A Journal on Adult Giftedness*.** No other journal focuses specifically on gifted adults. Unlike the traditional view of adult giftedness as high levels of productivity and creativity, advanced development in adults is defined as the deepening of the personality and strengthening of human values such as empathy, concern for others, responsibility and integrity.

NAME ______________________________
ADDRESS ______________________________
____
CITY ____________ STATE ____________ ZIP ______

To order, fill out and return this form to Snowpeak Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122. This journal is published annually and is available at a cost of $15 (Foreign/Canadian $18 U.S. Funds).

Linda Sinclair

from parent to parent

Only the parent of a gifted child can truly understand both the joy and the pain, the wonder and the frustration, the bitter and the sweet of raising an exceptional child. It sometimes seems for every two moments of exhilaration there is a moment of exasperation thrown in to keep us humble. Then again, some gifted parents will tell you the entire experience is humbling, but in the same breath will recount the many joys they alone experience and you know that they wouldn't have it any other way.

No one, though, will deny that parenting, a challenging endeavor for anyone, is even more so for the parent of a gifted child. Jackie and Nick Alexandrow of Colorado Springs, Colorado, are raising two gifted boys, Michael, age 6, and Nick, age 11. In the process of having Michael evaluated, Jackie described some of her perceptions as a parent of gifted children. In this column and the next, I will be sharing Jackie's insights with you.

"Sometimes I wonder why Michael doesn't glow in the dark. He has some inner vitality and spirit that I can't identify using words that I know. There is an enthusiastic energy that radiates from him, touching everyone with laughter and vibrancy and smiles. He's like a well of cool water refreshing everyone who 'drinks' from him. He wears me out and yet fuels me, draining me with demands, but firing my soul with renewed energy."

"These children are so much fun, so challenging, and so rewarding. Their brightness makes them such great companions. There is such an interchange of feelings, of knowledge, of shared experiences. It is a joy to watch their reactions to the world; their sense of wonder is contagious."

"Raising gifted children does have its difficulties, though. For one thing, it is hard to deal with being unable to talk to other parents about my concerns, because they perceive it as bragging or saying my child is better than theirs. Parents of gifted children have as many problems and questions as other parents. It is so important to find other parents of gifted children to talk to; we need someone who will listen to our concerns and understand."

"Just learning to accept and understand the unique way our children react to their world takes some time. A while ago, I took Michael to school and he asked why the flag out front was hanging at half mast. I told him I didn't know and suggested he ask his teacher. When I picked him up that afternoon, he was very agitated and explained that the principal had told the students that the flag was at half mast because a man in California had used a gun and killed some children in their schoolyard. He was so upset that he insisted I read him the entire newspaper account of the incident. He remained so concerned that I decided to ask some of the other parents at the school the next day if their children had been so upset, thinking that perhaps the situation had not been explained in a sensitive manner, but the others told me their children had not even mentioned it."

(Continued in next issue.) ■

Linda Sinclair is a freelance writer from Denver, Colorado and parent of a highly gifted child.

Understanding Our Gifted™

Don't Delay. Return This Order Form Today!

☐ New Subscriber
☐ Gift Subscription (for your friends, teachers, relatives)
☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD

YES! Start my subscription to *Understanding Our Gifted™*. Payment is enclosed or charge my VISA or MASTER CARD. (Just $30 a year) – (Canada-$35 U.S.; Foreign $37.50 U.S.) NO RISK GUARANTEE: If at any time you decide *Understanding Our Gifted* is not for you, write 'cancel' across the label and return it for a full refund of unmailed issues.

Card #____________________
Expiration Date________________
____
Signature

NAME________________________________
COURTESY OF (if gift) ________________________
ADDRESS ______________________________
CITY____________STATE__________ZIP________

Make checks payable to SNOWPEAK PUBLISHING, INC.™, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122 (303) 798-0986

THE BULLETIN BOARD

This space is for you!

We are happy to use THE BULLETIN BOARD in any way that will serve parents, teachers and non-profit agencies. This will enable you to support each others' needs. Send us your request and we'll print it on the bulletin board as space permits.

The Roeper City and Country School, Roeper Review and The Global Awareness Committee of NAGC and the World Council for Gifted & Talented Children are co-sponsoring a Conference on Global Awareness on October 27th and 28th in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. For information about the conference, please contact:

Dr. Karen Williams, Editor
Roeper Review, P.O. Box 329
Bloomfield HIlls, Michigan 48013.
(313)642-1500, ext. 158.

NOTICE

If you are interested in an internship or postdoctoral placement, please send your resume to Dr. Linda Silverman, c/o Snowpeak Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122.

ANNOUNCEMENT

We have recevied several inquiries about placing paid advertisements, and notices about private schools and special programs. Your inquiries are appreciated. However, at this time we are not accepting advertisements and cannot print announcements of private programs. We are happy to announce conferences on the bulletin board. If our policy changes about taking ads, we will let you know in a future issue. We have also received requests to review books but we have no room to do so at the moment. If we expand the newsletter in the future or develop a catalog of books and materials of interest to our readers, we will request submission of materials for review on this bulletin board.

NEXT ISSUE

FOCUS:

MORAL DEVELOPMENT

MORAL DILEMMAS AS FORMULATED BY GIFTED STUDENTS
Nicholas Colangelo

THINKING AND FEELING GLOBALLY
Annemarie Roeper

The voice of the intelligence is soft and weak, said Freud. It is drowned out by the roar of fear. It is ignored by the voice of desire. It is contradicted by the voice of shame. It is hissed away by hate, and extinguished by anger. Most of all it is silenced by ignorance.

Karl Menninger
The Progressive, Oct., 1953.

UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED™
P.O. Box 3489
Littleton, CO 80122

BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
Littleton, CO
Permit No. 493

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED™

Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

Volume 1, Issue 6

July 1989

Empathy, Ethics, And Global Education

Dr. Annemarie Roeper

Global education, in essence, means understanding the totality of interdependence. Interdependence is an unalterable fact of life for everything on this earth as well as in the universe. The calcium which is now in our bodies was created billions of years ago in some turbulent events in the universe. A book written in England leads to a death threat in Iran that resounds all around the world. We are deeply immersed in an interdependent network. Our well-being, our very existence, depends on the microcosm of our body, the cells and bacteria, as well as the macrocosm of the rays of the sun and the universe beyond. For this reason, all of our actions affect others who affect others and, in the end, affect us again. Ecology of behavior is a reality – a reality which seems self-evident and which we may be aware of; yet, it is not incorporated in our emotions, thoughts, activities and way of life. We have not really incorporated the concept that the world and everything in it, animate and inanimate, completely depend on each other. Nothing happens or exists that does not

(Continued on page 7)

FOCUS ON:

MORAL DEVELOPMENT

INSIDE

The Hidden Gifted Learner
Suzanne Perry 3

Parenting the Gifted
Elizabeth Meckstroth 4

Instructional Strategies
Joyce VanTassel-Baska . 5

The Reading Room
Stephanie Tolan 6

The Highly Gifted
Kathi Kearney................. 13

Personality Plus
Linda Silverman 14

Creative Ventures and Encounters
Jerry Flack 15

Adolescent Passages
Thomas Buescher........... 16

Current Developments in Gifted Education
Dorothy Knopper........... 18

From Parent to Parent
Linda Sinclair 19

Moral Dilemmas as Formulated by Gifted Students

Dr. Nicholas Colangelo

"Are gifted students more moral than others?" "Should we expect gifted youngsters to have higher moral sensitivities?" "Is there a relationship between intelligence/talent and moral development?" I find these stimulating questions and worthy of study. Unfortunately, it has been my experience that a number of people have arrived at answers to these questions based on either "one gifted kid I knew" or, most often, on some belief system. What is clear is that conclusions are not based on any systematic empirical evidence. My interest is to try to provide evidence on the moral judgment characteristics of students identified as gifted so that we can begin to learn about how these youngsters perceive and respond to moral problems.

The past several years have witnessed increased interest in the social/emotional needs of gifted youngsters, but the area of giftedness and moral development has received minimal attention. Tannenbaum (1983) recognized moral talent as a legitimate area of identification of giftedness, and I have done some research on moral issues

(Continued on page 10)

FROM THE EDITOR

Our topic for this issue is moral development – a mushrooming area of interest in our field. As Annemarie Roeper points out in her article, one of the legacies of giftedness is greater awareness. Gifted children and adults are sensitive to world affairs, to violence, to injustice, to the pain of others. This sensitivity needs a means of expression at home and at school. The world can be a confusing place to a mind that seeks order. Gifted children often ask profound ethical questions, and their inquiry begins at an early age. It is difficult to know how to handle a child's concerns. But we do know this: we must respond in an authentic manner. We need to listen, to share our own concerns, to puzzle together over what might be done to make this a better world, and perhaps even to make a family or classroom action plan to enable some kind of constructive involvement.

In the last few years we have witnessed a groundswell of activity in gifted education directed at enhancing our awareness of world problems and their potential solutions. We now have a global awareness committee/division in the National Association for Gifted Children and the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children. Teachers and parents are uniting to help children learn about ecology, nonviolent conflict resolution, world harmony, preservation of resources, and other related issues.

Global education has become a priority for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. The Roeper City and Country School is sponsoring a special conference on global awareness on October 27th and 28th. The parent committee of the National Association for Gifted Children has decided that their keynote address for this year's conference will be "It's a Small World," also on October 28th. State conferences like the one held in Ohio a few months ago featured speakers on global empathy. School districts throughout the United States are setting aside funds for program development in this important area of education.

It is exciting to see so much being done to provide our children with the information and tools they need to take an active part in helping create a more humane society. I want to publicly thank all those individuals who have dedicated themselves to this task.

Linda Silverman

Understanding Our Gifted™
Published by: **Snowpeak Publishing, Inc.™**

Publisher
Linda Mancini

Editor
Dr. Linda Kreger Silverman

Cartoonist
Linda Leviton

Column Editors
Dr. Thomas Buescher, *Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University*
Dorothy Knopper, *State Consultant on the Gifted, Colorado Department of Education*
Martha Morelock, *Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study, Tufts University*
Dr. Suzanne Perry, *Project Think, Aurora Public Schools, Aurora, Colorado*
Linda Sinclair, *Freelance Writer, Denver, Colorado*
Stephanie Tolan, *Author and Consultant, Waterford, New York*
Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska, *College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia*

Advisory Board and Regular Contributors
Dr. Nicholas Colangelo, *University of Iowa*
Dr. James Delisle, *Kent State University*
Dr. Jerry Flack, *University of Colorado, Colorado Springs*
Column Editor
Dr. Holly Hultgren, *Principal, Boulder Valley Schools*
Dr. Nancy Jackson, *University of Washington*
Kathi Kearney, *Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children, Auburn, Maine*
Column Editor
Elizabeth Meckstroth, *Counselor and Author, Dayton, Ohio*
Column Editor
Dr. Wendy Roedell, *Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, ESD 121, Seattle, Washington*
Dr. Annemarie Roeper, *Co-Founder of the Roeper City and Country School, Roeper School West, and the Roeper Review*

***Understanding Our Gifted*, a *SNOWPEAK* publication, (ISSN 1040-1350) is published bimonthly by Snowpeak Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122. Subscriptions are $30 for 1 year (6 issues). Back issues/single copies are $6.50. Canadian subscriptions are $35.00 U.S. Foreign subscriptions are $37.80 U.S. Third class postage paid at Littleton, CO. Subscription inquiries should be sent to the publishing office. For subscription address changes, send mailing label along with new address to *UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED*, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO, 80122, eight weeks before moving. Material in *Understanding Our Gifted* may be copied for personal use only. No material may be reproduced for publication without written permission of author and publisher. Appropriate credit must be given.** **Copyright 1989, SNOWPEAK PUBLISHING, INC. All rights reserved.**

Suzanne M. Perry

THE HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

The Gifted Female (Part I)

Rachel gave a toss of her permed curls and shot a glance at the guy sprawled in the desk two aisles away. He didn't have his hand up in response to Mr. Fitzgerald's algebra query. Neither did Rachel. Of course, *she* knew the answer. As a matter of fact there wasn't one thing Mr. Fitzgerald had introduced all year that she hadn't grasped immediately. She couldn't let the guys in class know that, however. Terribly uncool. On tests she only let herself get every other problem right. It maintained a nice facade of mediocrity. Even Mr. Fitzgerald didn't have a clue about what she could really do. In fact, there were times when Rachel herself wasn't sure if the old pizazz wasn't slipping a little – it had been so long since she'd really used it.

Up in the front row, Sheila's hand waved back and forth for the umpteenth time since class started. "Mr. Fitzgerald! I'm not sure I totally understood that last equation. Could you go over it one more time?"

A collective groan rose from the class. Everyone knew that Sheila was so smart she could probably teach the class. She'd gotten 100% on every test since the start of the year. Nobody could figure out why she was constantly asking for help and acting like she didn't know a thing about math.

Barbara's hand shot up, "I know another way of explaining it." No one looked surprised. Talk around school was that you could forget about asking Barb out, because she was already married – to her books. Nobody doubted that she was brilliant, but it seemed like she had to prove it all over again every day in class.

Rachel, Sheila and Barbara are manifesting some of the behaviors noted at times in school age gifted females:

Disappearing Giftedness

Rachel has great mathematical strengths but wants her competence to remain her own little secret, for fear of becoming unpopular. Silverman (1986) finds that gifted girls "disappear" for a variety of reasons. Biased identification, early sex role stereotyping, lack of role models and inadequate support systems all contribute to girls' "vanished" abilities.

The Cinderella Complex

Dowling (1981) suggests that individuals like Sheila have the self defeating need to be rescued from taking full responsibility for themselves. Rather than confidently proceeding and growing in talent areas, they stymie their own progress by compulsively relying on others to do or check their performance. This behavior impedes gifted females from realizing their full potential.

The Imposter Phenomenon

Barbara feels a constant need to prove herself in the eyes of others. Clance and Imes (1978) discovered that females displaying this behavior feared that others would "find out" that they weren't the genuine article – not really as talented as the countenance they presented to the world. When gifted little girls grow up in a world where their giftedness is not reinforced, this can be a natural outcome. ■

*In the next issue, I will address the question **"What's a parent to do?"** about hidden giftedness in their daughters.*

REFERENCES

Clance, P.R. & Imes, S.A. (1978). The imposter phenomena in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice. 15* (3). 241-245.

Dowling, C. (1981). *The Cinderella complex.* New York: Summit Books.

Silverman, L.K. (1986). What happens to the gifted girl? In C.J. Maker (Ed.) *Critical issues in gifted education, Volume 1: Defensible programs for the gifted.* (pp 43-89). Rockville, M.D.: Aspen.

Suzanne Perry, Ph.D., is Instructional Resource for Project Think in the Aurora Public Schools in Colorado, and author of the children's book, *Giftedness: Living with it and Liking it.*

Elizabeth Meckstroth

PARENTING

Hero With A Million Faces

Parents are the number one heroes for pre-teens, teens, and young adults. In his recent research on heroism, Dr. Frank Farley found that for students at the University of Wisconsin, (plausibly, gifted children with hindsight) moms outranked any other heroines six to one! And dads triumphed twice as often as any other hero (Buffington, 1989; Stark, 1986)!

Consider the implications that your children can see you as a hero or heroine:

- Your life and relationship becomes a scaffold for inspiration and achievement.
- Your children can appreciate that you are doing something heroic for them.
- You become models your children want to emulate!

What does it take to become a hero? Farley found that parents who are regarded as heroes and heroines have some outstanding qualities. They:

- *show affection.*
- *are loving, generous, and honest.*
- *are intelligent and skillful.*
- *have depth of character.*
- *take risks; they look into their futures with strength, courage, and optimism.*

Heroes are kind and gentle. They have a timeless quality of DEPTH of purpose and integrity. HONESTY is an essential attribute: honesty permeates and deepens heroes' lives. Farley suggests that heroes and heroines must be more than role models – they must do something to make the world a better place.

It would be a good investment to occasionally explore and discuss your different definitions and expectations of love, optimism, compassion, affection, generosity, and honesty. What is love in operational terms? What are the components of optimism? When is generosity self-defeating?

Just as children learn their mother tongue, they learn their sense of moral integrity, trust, and responsibility within the family. Home is a microcosm where children can experience their effectiveness and power to make a difference through problem solving, service, and cooperation. When parents engender respect for the range of peoples' needs and life styles, children develop a sense of purpose and use their abilities to benefit people of the world, as well as themselves.

Our children often receive responses that they are too idealistic, too sensitive, or not realistic. Parents can honor these qualities and help their children use them courageously to develop principles of fairness, harmony, and idealism. They can nurture purposes to live. In making decisions in the family, the ethical and moral effects and implications can be considered. Rather than ridicule idealism, parents can let their children lead them to greater realms of respect and awareness.

Little princes are treated like royalty and they grow up to act like kings. Heroes' journeys have many trials. The character of heroines is developed through challenges. Heroes endure the excruciating – if we applaud persistence. If we treat our children with affection, optimism, courage, and honesty, will they grow up to be respected as heroes?■

REFERENCES

Buffington, P.W. (1989, April). A matter of heroics. *Sky, 18*(4), pp. 75-79.

Stark, E. (1986, May). Mom and dad: The great American heroes. *Psychology Today. 20*(5), pp. 12-13.

Elizabeth Meckstroth is a therapist and consultant in Dayton, Ohio and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child.*

> *"To be in good moral condition requires at least as much training as to be in good physical condition."*
>
> *– Jawaharlal Nehru –*

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Joyce VanTassel-Baska

Literature for the Young Gifted Child (Part I)

The literature program for the verbally talented young child needs to be very rich from the beginning of the language arts experience in the home and in school settings. Children who are reading by kindergarten need a strong literature program at that stage of their development. The use of a basal reading series typically focuses too much time and attention on mastering the reading process, particularly phonics, rather than allowing gifted students the opportunity for holistic reading of good literature. One way to combat this problem is to build a strong literature program for the gifted beginning at school entrance, infusing the best and most challenging selections at each stage of development.

Good recommendations abound to help teachers develop such a program. Baskin & Harris's (1980) *Books for the Gifted Child* offers annotated reading lists chosen deliberately for the intellectually gifted child at the primary level. These authors have developed useful criteria for selecting appropriate literature for the gifted child:

1) The language used in books for the gifted should be rich, varied, precise, complex, and exciting, for language is the instrument for the reception and expression of thought.

2) Books should be chosen with an eye to their open-endedness, their capacity to inspire contemplative behavior, such as through techniques of judging time sequences, shifting narrators, and unusual speech patterns of characters.

3) Books for the gifted should be complex enough to allow interpretative and evaluative behaviors to be elicited from readers.

4) Books for the gifted should help them build problem-solving skills and develop methods of productive thinking.

5) Books should provide role models for emulation.

6) Books should be broad-based in form, from picture books to folktale and myths, to non-fiction, to biography, to poetry, to fiction.

A program like Junior Great Books offers the best of classical and contemporary literature selections for young students and has been successfully used at kindergarten and first grade levels for the gifted. Its rich selections combined with the discussion model are very effective in engaging the young gifted child in the world of books and ideas.

The literature program for young children then should provide the context for discussion among students of key issues, ideas, and themes contained in literature and be a catalyst for student writing, drawing, and performing. It should provide the basis for the critical thinking component of the language arts curriculum, helping young students develop their analytical, interpretive, and evaluation skills. Goals of such a gifted literature program may be stated as follows:

- To expose students to appropriately challenging reading material at their stage of readiness.
- To provide opportunities for small group discussion of literature selections.
- To develop critical reading behavior in the areas of analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.
- To develop and refine reading comprehension skills. ■

In the next issue, I will address reading aloud, independent reading, and inquiry techniques.

REFERENCE

Baskin, B.H. & Harris, K.H. (1980). *Books for the gifted child*. London: R. R. Bowker.

Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Ed.D., is Jody and Layton Smith Professor of Education at William and Mary College, in Williamsburg, Virginia. She is editor of *Comprehensive Curriculum for Gifted Learners*.

Stephanie S. Tolan

THE READING ROOM

Hello again, and welcome back to the reading room. Once again, the visit will be devoted to young adult novels. The first, *In Summer Light*, by Zibby O'Neal, deals, very frankly, with *genius*. But the genius at the heart of this book is not the astounding potential of a young character; it is the lifelong genius of a world-famous painter, the father of the novel's central character. In dealing with giftedness as an attribute of children, we often forget that it is a trait that follows a person through life. In this enlightened time when parents are offered advice on how to cope with extraordinarily gifted children, we might overlook the fact that children sometimes must cope with extraordinarily gifted parents.

Kate, a seventeen year old with innate artistic talent, is spending a summer at home with her famous, brilliant, difficult and self-centered father, the man she tried for fifteen years to please, and on whom she has finally given up. He is, she believes, obsessed with his work and himself, with no room for love and family.

This is a book painted with words, rich with light and color, texture and image. O'Neal explores the problem of finding a place for the gifts of the younger generation in a family long focused on the gifts of the elder. On hand to help create a bridge between father and daughter is a graduate student staying with the family while cataloguing the father's work for a retrospective showing. Kate finds love as well as the nerve to assert her own talent, and learns to respect her father's gifts as she accepts her own. This is an important book for gifted families!

The second book this issue is Margaret Mahy's *The Catalogue of the Universe*. Mahy, a New Zealand novelist, writes about two very differently gifted teens, trying to find themselves, each other, and their place in the world as they leave high school to face the world. It is a genuine love story.

Tall, beautiful Angela May, whose gifts are philosophical and poetic and mostly unknown to herself, is the illegitimate daughter of a wealthy, married man. Raised in genteel but very real poverty by an independent, free-spirited mother, Angela longs to be reunited with the father she has never known.

Short, unbeautiful Tycho Potter (named for the astronomer Tycho de Brahe) is more standardly gifted – a scientific, nerdy type who loves Angela but is reconciled to being her friend. He longs to be loved, unconditionally, by anyone. Neither realizes that their friendship is based on a mutual understanding they've come to take for granted – an understanding that is far rarer and more important than conventional romance.

This book is an exploration of reality versus romance, of genuine love (of self and other) versus conventional expectations, and of "the wobble" of truth. But its heart can't be caught and pinned down in a few words. Written with beauty and passion, it defies simple condensation. There is pain in this story, and joy and fulfillment. It is a fine book to read, to experience, think about, and share.*

*Using movie ratings, I'd suggest this book is PG. ■

Stephanie Tolan, from Waterford, New York, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*.

have an impact on anything else. It is thus a matter of survival to think in terms of global responsibility.

EMPATHY

We are at a point in the history of our planet where it has become a necessity to become globally aware. We need to understand our interconnectedness in every facet of living – our private lives, politics, education, economics, law, medicine and everything else. This knowledge in its final consequence alters our way of life and our way of educating children. In order to incorporate this reality, we need not only to know it, but feel it. We need to feel our connection with others, and see others as part of us. We need to develop global empathy. Only then can we begin to act on this knowledge and teach it to our children. We need to try to feel the world – its beauty, its sorrow, its suffering, its conflicts. This means the planet and everything on it – the plants, the animals, the environment, and the people.

We know about different cultures, but do we feel how it feels to grow up in a different culture? How does it feel to grow up in South Africa, in Russia, in South America, in different parts of our own country, during a war, with a different religious background or with different economic circumstances? How does it feel to be homeless? Today we know more about different countries, different people and their experiences, and global events. Television has opened the world to us to a much larger extent. We watched the massacre at Beijing on the news. We know about it, but are we feeling it? Or are we so overwhelmed with so much suffering and turmoil that we have lost the ability for empathy by the time we become adults?

Do children have empathy? Yes, they do. Children are new to this world. Each experience is fresh and three-dimensional – lived through with soul, mind and body. It becomes part of them and they feel it deeply. Gifted children show great empathy for others in many different ways. They cry at sad stories or movies. They get very emotionally involved and feel strongly for themselves and others. Even though they may be jealous of a sibling, they cannot stand it when they see their brother or sister punished at home or when they see similar things done to others at school. I have seen gifted children refuse to participate in teasing other children or in doing anything that is hurtful to other children or animals. This does not mean, of course, that they do not have many hostile feelings and express them in aggressive behavior. But they are often the ones who will, for example, befriend the child who is seen as strange.

Helena Deutsch, a psychoanalyst who wrote a great deal about gifted people once said, "The gifted have a love affair with the world." It was her theory that the gifted extend feelings of love and empathy beyond the personal environment, that they have the ability to truly experience the world. In other words, the gifted have a greater capacity for empathy and can empathize with a greater number of people.

It is my belief that what begins as empathy in the child develops into a value system in the adult. It is the task of the modern educator to keep alive this global empathy and help develop the value systems of our gifted children and all children. This requires that we, as adults, enhance our own global awareness; then we can help children develop their own ethical values and value systems. The concept of global empathy represents a new point of view for us. Humankind's problem has been that it has been separated from this awareness in the past and, therefore, has developed along a path which is contrary to reality. Our feeling, and therefore, our thinking, is directed toward our own limited goals rather than an understanding of our interconnectedness. This leads us to act against the laws of interdependence.

> *The "Self" depends on the human and natural environment in order to grow, and the environment depends on the "Self" to treat it well and carefully.*

INTERDEPENDENCE

An interdependent model of thinking requires a completely different focus – a different way of living, feeling, thinking, learning, teaching, and conceptualizing. For example, for centuries we have deforested our landscape and interrupted the ecosystem with disastrous results. Now we are about to destroy the ecology by deforestation of the rain forests. Events such as these are not single events, but are consequences of our basic non-interdependent attitudes and manner of thinking. Ecologists and environmentalists have attempted to increase our awareness; however, we're still functioning in our old modes of thinking and feeling.

The lack of interdependent thinking skills leads to many of the great problems and tragedies in the world. Interdependent thought looks at cause and effect as though they were many pebbles thrown into a pond. They each create ever-widening circles, criss-crossing each other, looking like chaos, but following a logical pattern and structure. Natural laws of interdependence are being discovered in ecology, heredity, etc. These laws can also be found in the structure of human relations, the structure of communities, the structure of trade. Laws of interdependence exist in all areas, but some have not yet been discovered. The task of the present is to learn about the interdependence of human relations.

(Continued on page 8)

Interdependent thought changes many concepts which have been taken for granted. Let's look at the concept of personal success, for example. The traditional concept of personal success grows from the concept of competition, for personal success means being better than others. **Success** within the framework of interdependence **would be defined as responsible participation in society**, not as popularity, power or financial earnings. Success in this context is shared success. The concept of competition, although not excluded, is replaced by the concept of cooperation as the moving force of our actions and behavior.

Survival of the fittest is replaced by survival of the planet, for the fittest is interdependently involved and could not survive without the planet. Nationalism would be redefined as helping and cooperating rather than competing, as pride in our country's compassion rather than comparative strength. The arms race is a typical example of lack of interdependent thought and planning, for the more weapons one country produces, the more others try to get them. Therefore, with each additional weapon we increase our national insecurity. Our politics and priorities would be basically different if we thought interdependently.

In the context of schools, interdependence means redefining our conceptions of learning and motivation. We must realize that everything has multiple causes and effects. Most of our lives are dominated by linear thinking: we think and act as though there were one cause and one effect. For instance, we believe all children are interested in outside success, and we assume that a grading system at school motivates children to learn. Therefore, we expect that grading systems will make them strive for this success. The reality, however, is that many students are not motivated by grades or outside success. Furthermore, while a grading system may motivate some children to learn, it also causes anxiety, aggression, resistance, competition, and other effects which we do not take into consideration. Also, we often disregard the fact that there are other ways that motivate children better. We might arouse their interest, we might praise them, they might want to please the adults, they might like to share information with a friend, they might be driven by their own inner motivations. We also need to examine whether the task being required is really necessary or even appropriate. Without consideration of the other causes and effects involved, we cannot understand the reasons why grading systems so often fail. We not only arrive at the wrong assumptions, but miss out on alternatives for stimulating inner directed learning.

Human beings need a community to which they belong, in order to feel safe and comfortable. The traditional structure of a community – including the school community – is based on a hierarchy. An interdependent community is based on a cooperative, participatory democracy rather than a hierarchy (Roeper, in press). A hierarchy assumes a top and a bottom, a loser and a winner. Yet, we all know the top depends on the bottom and vice versa. We need to understand that we are part of larger entities. We live in a community which is part of the state, part of the country, part of the continent and part of the world. Communities and nations as well as people are interdependent and can only co-exist satisfactorily if they learn to cooperate.

ETHICS

Ethical behavior must also be re-evaluated within the concept of interdependence. The ethics of interdependence differ basically from the ethics of obedience. The ethics of obedience grow out of hierarchical thinking; they say, in effect, that it is ethical to do as you are told by those in power. Schools expect this type of obedience. Children are called "responsible" if they obey the rules and the authorities. But, in actuality, obedience does not teach responsibility; it relieves individuals of the burden of responsibility since they do not have to think for themselves. There are, and I want to make a point of this, also other reasons why we often choose to do what others tell us – when we trust their expertise and believe that they will act on our behalf. This is not obedience, however, since we use our own judgment to decide whom to trust.

Ethics in terms of interdependence are universal, for ethics make an impact on others. Universal ethics are based on equal human rights and equal human responsibility. Out of this framework grows all ethical behavior. Because we depend on each other we have to learn to trust and to be trustworthy. We may not use each other for our own purposes. Abuse of this principle is one of the basic causes of distrust and hostility.

Children suffer from the abuse of trust. If, for instance, the demand for a popular teacher is so great that not all children can be accommodated in her room, it is most likely that the child excluded will not be the child of the board member. The reality may be that another child is much more in need of this particular teacher than the daughter of the board member. This, then, is an example of decisions being made for reasons other than basic needs. Out of such actions grow resentment and alienation.

SELF-ACTUALIZATION

To live in an interdependent society means developing self-actualizing individuals at home and at school. A newborn child is dependent and develops self-esteem based on the love of parents. As the child grows older, the traditional model supports this feeling of dependency. You are a worthwhile person **if** you win, **if** you are popular, **if** you get good grades, **if** you behave well. These are the messages that our children

(Continued on next page)

receive from those in charge of their lives. From an interdependent perspective, however, we recognize each child's inherent value. Each of us brings something to this world from the moment we are born. We bring something unique which needs recognition, which needs to be allowed to blossom and to grow. In my work with children I would say that eighty percent of children who seem to have problems have not been given the right to be themselves by their environment and have experienced a lack of respect and understanding because they do not fit into the accepted societal norms.

The problem of fitting the norm is particularly acute for gifted children. We educate children to want to be the best, to climb the ladder to the top, rather than being themselves. In reality, we are involved in give and take, in an exchange of emotions and actions, all through our lives. Gifted children need to be appreciated for who they are, not what they do, and given opportunities to appreciate and support others. The objective of home and school is moving them toward self-actualization.

In the interdependent model, the concept of self-actualization is essential. Only a self-actualized person can really cope with interdependence constructively. Otherwise, the experience of deficit, personal needs, hunger for recognition, hunger for inner safety through outer support, overshadow our ability to consciously participate in the human network of interdependence. We become blinded to deeds and realities beyond our selves. On the other hand, we also need the support, the help, the loving understanding, and the mercy of others to reach a state of self-actualization. Therefore, the "Self" cannot develop unless the reality of the connections with everything around it is part of this development. This, in itself, is an example of the reality of interdependence. *The "Self" depends on the human and natural environment in order to grow, and the environment depends on the "Self" to treat it well and carefully.*

Each person is an influential part of society and of the world. We are both a unit in ourselves and a part of many larger entities. Each is part of the past, the present and the future and the plurality of this world and its complexities. This awareness, this focus on the connectedness with all others, helps us overcome some of our innate loneliness and separateness, giving different meaning to our lives, within an interdependent framework.

EDUCATION

Focus on interdependence makes a practical impact in many ways on our lives and on the educational process. *First*, it requires changes of habits and focus within ourselves. Only when the adults integrate the fact of interdependence into their consciousness can they teach it or model it to children. *Second*, interdependence means that the structure of education should be communities rather than institutions, for this offers opportunities to learn the facts of interdependence through living them. It requires different administrative structures allowing for participation in decision-making by those impacted and those able to make them (Roeper, 1986). We need to allow everyone – whether they are children, teachers or support workers – the right to a task, a stake, and a voice within the school community. *Third*, the process of education changes. The focus on interdependence can exist in school groups by stressing cooperation rather than competition, by offering cooperative activities as well as cooperative play equipment, by solving conflicts within this context, through discussion groups and other problem solving activities.

While traditional education stresses skill learning, in the interdependent model concept learning is greatly emphasized. The curriculum, from preschool on, can reflect this focus. (See Roeper, in press.) *Geography, social studies, science can and should be offered at an early age* with stress on interdependence, on the likenesses between people – peoples all over the world – as well as their differences, and their relationships to each other (Roeper, 1988). Global and ethical considerations become part of all subject matter.

The concept of value-free education is counter that of interdependence. Information and knowledge learned in a value-free learning situation usually is used to support the competitive, hierarchical success approach. It actually avoids addressing the ethical questions of our times – which surround us everywhere – and does not give the children the tools to cope with them and to become involved with them as they grow older. These questions range from how to use atomic energy to whether or not to keep terminally ill patients alive, as well as our responsibility to abolish world hunger and to preserve our environment. Actually, children – especially gifted children – are most interested in such questions and will voluntarily ask them. They can be discussed with increasing complexity, beginning with very young children.

THE GIFTED

I have not related these ideas only to the gifted child, because I believe that these thoughts are universally applicable and not limited to the gifted. However, they are of specific importance for the gifted, and particularly appropriate to the unique characteristics of this group. The gifted are global thinkers, as they are apt to see the whole, the philosophy or the scientific framework, before they concern themselves with the details. The gifted are complex thinkers and are able better than others to discern the intricacies of interdependence. They are concept oriented, and have an enormous desire to make sense of this world,

(Continued on page 10)

with gifted youngsters (Colangelo, 1982; Colangelo & Dettmann, 1985), beginning with my doctoral dissertation (Colangelo, 1977). More research in this area is obviously needed. In this article I will report on a study I conducted with gifted adolescents regarding how they formulate and think about moral problems.

HISTORY

A popular approach to the study of moral reasoning and moral development has been the theory and research of Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg (1958, 1969) proposed that moral judgment progresses universally through an invariant sequence of stages. Each stage is qualitatively different from, and more advanced than, the previous one. The stages progress from egocentrism (fear of punishment and "What's in it for me?") to the adoption of a set of universal ethical principles (e.g., The Golden Rule).

Kohlberg based his theory on clinical interviews with young men who were presented with hypothetical moral dilemmas followed by a series of open-ended, probing questions. The most famous of these dilemmas is the story of Heinz, whose wife is dying from a rare disease. A druggist has recently discovered a cure to this disease, but he is charging so much for the drug that Heinz cannot raise the money to pay for it. Heinz becomes desperate and steals the drug to save his wife. The participants are asked questions such as, "Should Heinz have stolen the drug? Why or why not? What would you have done if you were Heinz?"

In studies with adolescents, Yussen (1977) and I (Colangelo, 1977, 1982) had high school students formulate their own moral dilemmas. We discovered that students generated stories quite different from Kohlberg's hypothetical dilemmas. Also, both of us found that the age and sex of the individuals influenced some of the characteristics of their written dilemmas.

METHOD

The subjects for this study consisted of 125 students, grades 9-12, who had been identified as gifted by their selection to participate in the Research and Guidance Laboratory Programme, University of Wisconsin-Madison (Pulvino, Colangelo, & Zaffrann, 1976).

During their visit to the laboratory, I asked the students if they wished to participate in a study designed to find out what kinds of problems students think are important. Students were given written and oral instruction to write a story that presented a realistic moral problem and to provide a solution. I did not provide any "examples" since Yussen (1977) had found that students produce "thinly veiled imitations of examples" (p. 162).

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

I developed a system for analyzing and rating the content of the problems and solutions (see Colangelo, 1982; Colangelo & Dettmann, 1985). Two trained raters analyzed the data.

There were a number of findings and I will summarize here only those I consider most important.

1. *All of the major characters in the Kohlberg dilemmas are male*. Content analysis for my study revealed that gifted boys virtually always wrote about male protagonists and gifted girls more often wrote about female protagonists.

2. *Kohlberg uses adults as the main characters in his dilemmas*. The clear pattern that emerged in my study was that **gifted students wrote about dilemmas where the characters were of their own age group** (84% of protagonists were adolescent age).

(Continued on next page)

---

to master it, and to make an impact on it. They are also research-minded – they want to find out, they want to make discoveries, because of their inner need for intellectual and emotional order. They are interested in the past and very concerned with the future. All of these characteristics lead them toward the concept of interdependence. It is now up to us to open the door for them and help them make sense of these concepts also. So, actually, it is the gifted who are our hope for the future. They are our hope for the development and the discovery of the laws of interdependence, which might give them some further tools to lead this globe toward a better future. ■

REFERENCES

Roeper, A. (1986). Participatory vs. hierarchical models for administration. The role of the principal. *Roeper Review*, 9(1), 4-10.

Roeper, A. (1988). The early environment of the child: Experience in a continuing search for meaning. In P. F. Brandwein & A. H. Passow, (Eds.), *Gifted young in science: Potential through performance*. (pp. 121-136). Washington, DC: National Science Teachers Association.

Roeper, A. (in press). *Education for life: The modern learning community*. Monroe, NY: Trillium Press.

For a free bibliography of materials on global awareness or information about the Global Awareness Committee of NAGC and the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, please contact:

Constance Shannon
654 S. Stapley, #122
Mesa, AZ 85204.

Dr. Annemarie Roeper is Co-Founder of the Roeper City and Country School, Roeper School West, and the Roeper Review.

3. *Kohlberg's dilemmas involve family and authority relationships*. Gifted students wrote about friendships and love relationships as the primary areas of moral conflict (combined for 53% of dilemmas). Only 12% of the stories involved family relationships and even fewer (6%) involved authority relationships.

4. *Kohlberg's dilemmas focus essentially on two types of issues: public welfare and life and death*. A rather amazing finding is that raters were able to identify 36 different issues in stories written by gifted adolescents. These issues included **family relations, peer relations, sexual relations, alcohol, drugs, self-concept, cheating, stealing, life and death issues, and reporting infractions.**

EXAMPLES

One of the richest aspects of the study was the actual stories and solutions written by the gifted adolescents. The stories indicate sensitivity, wit, imagination, humor, and reflection. Below are a few examples taken directly from the writings of the students.

#1: 11th grade boy

Problem

Joe Box was waddling down the street when he suddenly saw a crime in progress. Some kids were in front of the school principal's house slicing tires, throwing eggs, waxing windows, borrowing engine parts, etc. Now the principal never did like or get along with Joe. Poor Joe got blamed for everything. Joe wasn't too crazy about the principal either, but his instinctive reaction was to call out to scare the vandals away. When Joe got there he could see all the faces of his friends. But by then it was too late. His friends cut out and Joe, who had done nothing, was the only one left at the scene and the principal caught him. Joe was faced with a terrific problem. The whole load was thrown in his lap. He was blamed for everything. He didn't know whether he should nark on his friends or take credit for the deed. He was pressured by the authorities but still wouldn't give an inch until he could figure out what to do. When he got home (after his parents came and got him) his father beat him and his mother scolded. He was suspended from school but still he remained quiet about what really happened. He never admitted anything but then again he didn't deny it either. He didn't want to nark on his best friends for fear of being hated and he kind of liked taking credit for it to sort of get even with the principal.

Solution

I would have confronted my friends and asked them to come forth and turn themselves in — or at least pitch in to pay for the damages. After all, if they can't do that for a best friend in a jam because of them, they can't be that good of friends.

# 2: 12th grade girl

Problem

There is a teacher with a class labelled 'out of order.' Constant confusion, noise and interruptions were the content. She tried desperately to find a way to control the class. Unfortunately, she came up with all the wrong ideas. Calling the principal was the wrong answer because no one respects him. He hasn't earned it. Giving more privileges didn't help because the students were too immature, so they took advantage of them.

Solution

To solve this the teacher should have made the class more interesting. She also could have demanded silence from the very beginning. If she could have listed some rules in her head and stuck to them instead of letting the students 'rule,' order in the class may have been preserved. All respect for her was lost because she did not lay down the law from the first day.

#3: 10th grade boy

Problem

Some people have no direction in life. They just float through never trying anything that might challenge the first beliefs they encountered. They are lazy. They don't care. They assume a state of apathy. They try to out-nothing each other. They drift. They don't try to discover why they exist. They just try to survive and take one breath after another. They have no foresight. They live and don't know why they are living or try to find out why. They never look at things in depth. They just skim off what they need and leave the rest. They don't care for anything but themselves. They go to church because it is the socially correct thing to do. They take little personal interest in anything. They don't raise questions. They don't make a fuss, they just accept. That is what I think is basically wrong today.

Solution

To remedy this I think schools could play a greater role in getting people to learn how to think, question and express themselves peacefully. We should be conditioned to ask about things we don't understand. We should be taught to gather information and draw our own acceptable conclusions.

#4: 11th grade boy

Problem

Steve and Mike were two good friends. One Friday night after a football game Steve bought some beer for him and Mike to drink. Steve was sure that Mike would go along with this and drink the beer with him. This was not so! Mike told Steve that he didn't believe in drinking alcoholic beverages. Steve got terribly mad and tried talking Mike into drinking with him. Mike listened to Steve's arguments, but still said no. Finally, Steve told Mike that he didn't ever want to go any place with him again. This was it for Mike. He said he would try just one to keep Steve happy. One led to another until Mike went home drunk.

Solution

If Mike wanted to get out of drinking just this one time, he could have made up

(Continued on page 12)

MORAL DILEMMAS Continued from page 11

an excuse. This isn't the solution though. If Mike and Steve want to stay friends as they have been before this happened, Mike should explain to Steve why he doesn't drink. Then tell him this is what he is going to stick to if they want to stay friends.

#5: 12th grade girl

Problem

Nancy is a bright freshman at a small junior high school. She relates well to people and is active in many organizations. Nancy is also fairly new to the school having been there for only a little over a year.

Nancy's friends include both boys and girls from all three grades. One friend Nancy has become close to is Dave. Although Dave is only a 7th grader, Nancy enjoys his company and shares many of his athletic interests. Unfortunately, Dave is also the only black student attending the small school. He too is very popular with all the students. Still, the students in the school begin to talk about Nancy and Dave. Several of the students tell the others that Nancy is merely trying to prove a point, she is demonstrating her lack of prejudice.

Eventually, of course, this gets back to Nancy and she is faced with a difficult problem. Nancy can try to ignore these stories and the peer pressure or she can stop spending time with Dave. The first choice seems impossible but Nancy knows the second one is unfair. What can she do?

Solution

I feel that the most important strength that a person can have is that of moral courage. If you know what is right and wrong – if you have defined this in your own mind there is no choice. I wouldn't like the pressure but I would continue to enjoy Dave's company. In the long run, being true to your convictions will make you a stronger, more confident person. I try not to respond unfairly to pressure from the outside which is unfair in itself.

DISCUSSION

It is quite well accepted that the preferred way to get youngsters to reflect on moral issues is to provide an atmosphere of open discussion where their thinking is challenged and where they can begin to explore strengths and inconsistencies in their own moral thinking. This is opposed to an indoctrination approach where right or wrong or preferred perspectives are "taught" to the student by an adult or authority.

So what do the results of my study offer to counselors and teachers who may conduct discussions relating to moral dilemmas with gifted students? First, gifted adolescents are highly sensitive to the moral aspects of a number of daily life situations. They do not relegate morality to a small compartmentalized part of their lives. Second, discussions or hypothetical dilemmas need to be sensitive to the sex of the protagonist. If the discussion is with gifted boys, they are most responsive to stories with a male (about their age) in a conflict. For gifted girls, it is the same in terms of a female protagonist. In a group of both boys and girls, it is important to provide a balance of hypotheticals in regard to sex of protagonist.

One of the issues that did arise as a moral dilemma was self-concept (10% of issues were rated as self-concept issues). The self-concept issue includes a search for identity, purpose and self-evaluation. It is interesting to note that such a search is considered a moral issue. I emphasize this only because traditionally self-concept is seen as a "psychological construct" and seldom ever viewed as a moral search.

My approach to studying moral reasoning with gifted adolescents does not provide any useful fix on "how moral" they are. Also, my research offers inconsequential direction in terms of how these adolescents might act in a given real-life situation. *What I do believe this line of research offers is an opportunity for educators to begin to explore with gifted adolescents what they see as the domains of morality and how they think about these domains.*

I am quite confident that gifted youngsters have strong and varied moral sensitivities. I think they need more opportunities to explore and share their own thinking. I would encourage school counselors (especially) and teachers to take opportunities to allow gifted youngsters (in small groups) to generate what they believe to be moral issues and to attempt to clarify their own thinking as they struggle at resolution. I would hope that publications in the field of gifted would encourage articles and special issues on research in this area as *Understanding Our Gifted* has done. ■

REFERENCES

Colangelo, N. (1977). *Identifying moral judgment in interviews.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Colangelo, N. (1982). Characteristics of moral problems as formulated by gifted adolescents. *Journal of Moral Education, 11,* 219-232.

Colangelo, N., & Dettmann, D. F. (1985). Characteristics of moral problems and solutions formed by students in grades 3-8. *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 19,* 260-271.

Kohlberg, L. (1958). *The development of modes of moral thinking and choice in years ten to sixteen.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago.

Kohlberg, L. (1969). Stage and sequence: The cognitive developmental approach to socialization. In D. Goslin (Ed.), *Handbook of socialization theory and research.* Chicago: Rand McNally.

Pulvino, C. J., Colangelo, N., & Zaffrann, R. T. (1976). *Laboratory counseling programmes.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Tannenbaum (1983). *Gifted children: Psychological and educational perspectives.* N.Y.: Macmillan.

Yussen, S. R. (1977). Characteristics of moral dilemmas written by adolescents. *Developmental Psychology, 13,* 162-163.

Dr. Nicholas Colangelo is Professor and Chair, Division of Counselor Education, University of Iowa.

Kathi Kearney

THE HIGHLY GIFTED

The Early College Option (Part III)

Early college attendance can be an effective educational option for highly gifted students who are eager for more challenging coursework than their regular school environments can provide. In the last two issues, we met Nicole, James, Veronica, and Sara – four highly gifted students who entered college early, in different ways and for different reasons.

A variety of unexpected issues often surround the early college decision and its implementation. In this column, we explore these issues and provide highly gifted students and their families with suggestions to ensure a smooth transition to the college environment.

ACADEMIC ISSUES

Take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SATs) or the American College Test (ACTs) before considering college coursework. Both tests are offered at various times throughout the school year. Your scores can help you decide if you are ready for the academic requirements of college.

Decide what kind of college or university you wish to attend. *Open-admissions schools* usually have fewer restrictions than more competitive colleges, and sometimes are easier to work with. Many open-admissions schools, designed to reach non-traditional students, are not allowed to discriminate on the basis of age in their admissions policies! However, competitive colleges also have many advantages, including research facilities, name recognition, and renowned faculty members. If several colleges are available in your area, explore the options at each.

Arrange a meeting to discuss early college attendance with admissions advisors. The younger the student, the more convincing you will need to be. Take copies of SAT or ACT scores and a school transcript, if available. Sometimes it is extremely advantageous for an independent advocate, such as the gifted education coordinator, a psychologist or counselor, or a professor at the university, to make the initial contact with the admissions office on the student's behalf.

Check with your local high school to see if college credits may be substituted for high school credits to meet graduation requirements. Policies vary widely from school to school and state to state. If you want high school credit for college courses, make sure that you obtain the agreement in writing before beginning the college coursework.

Choose your initial college courses carefully and be prepared to work hard. Do your best, but do not expect to always get perfect grades.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL ISSUES

Create support systems. An understanding college advisor with a talent for cutting bureaucratic red tape; tutorial assistance; parental enthusiasm; and a support group of other young college students are all examples of the kinds of support networks that make an enormous difference.

Weigh all the factors before making a decision about full-time attendance at a residential vs. a commuter setting. Students younger than 17 who attend college and live in the dormitories need to be very mature socially as well as academically. Gone are the days of nosy housemothers and midnight curfews; today's college dormitories are often the scene of heavy drinking, drug use, and casual sex. James was lucky; when he went away to college at age 14, his first roommate had extremely strict standards, and the following year he lived in a private dorm room. Nicole opted for a school with a special residential program for young college students, including rules appropriate for young adolescents. A second factor in the residential vs. commuter decision is the importance of family influence; families need to decide together if the loss of daily parental influence in the adolescent years is outweighed by the academic and social gains of residential life.

Remember that highly gifted students often need several sets of peers. Radical acceleration such as early college entrance offers the highly gifted student intellectual peers, but he or she may still need other peers, closer in chronological age, for sports and social activities. Wise students will arrange for this, and wise parents will support them in their choices. James' mother, for instance, drove him many miles every other weekend to attend social activities sponsored by their religious group. Here he was able to date young women of his own chronological age. (Unfortunately for James' mother, who had to do the driving, qualifying for a driver's license also depends in part on chronological age!) ■

In the next issue, the final column in the early college series will explore the legal and family development issues surrounding early college entrance.

Kathi Kearney is Director of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in Auburn, Maine, a resource teacher, and editor of *Highly Gifted Children*.

Linda K. Silverman

PERSONALITY PLUS

Coping With Stress

"Don't worry; be happy" has become a code for living in the '80s. However, this philosophy doesn't work for everybody. Some people are born worriers. They're very good at worrying, and, after all, somebody's got to do it – otherwise who would see to it that things got done properly? "Don't worry; be happy" works well for people who don't set high goals for themselves. But the higher your goals, the more likely you are to become a worry-wart.

Some amount of worrying is natural for the gifted. When does worrying become a problem? When it becomes a way of life with no breaks – a generalized state of anxiety. When it interferes with sleep or school or work or relationships. When it turns into stress-related illnesses. When it undermines self-confidence and self-esteem. When it leads to avoidance of challenges. If you worry but do it anyway, if you experience peace, trust and joy much of the time, if you like yourself and are happy with life, don't worry about worrying.

Stress can be magnified in the gifted because they experience everything so intensely. In his dissertation, Rogers (1981) found that gifted children react more intensely than average children to frustration and criticism. They also have a greater amount of awareness: awareness of the state of the world and its dangers; awareness of the complexities of problems; recognition of injustices and incongruities; and awareness of their own helplessness (Roeper, 1982).

Annemarie Roeper (1982) reminds us that stress can be a positive force under the right conditions. "The first and most important way in which we can help the child is to give him the strength to cope with stress" (p. 5). We cannot create a stress-free world nor can we wrap up our children in cotton batting to protect them. Instead, we need to help them face each stressor in their lives with the conviction that they can handle it. This does not mean letting them face their problems all by themselves; it means consoling them, validating their perceptions, discussing alternatives, supporting their courage, and gently reminding them that you believe in their strength. ■

REFERENCES

Rogers, M. T. (1986). *A comparative study of developmental traits of gifted and average youngsters.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Denver, Denver, CO.

Roeper, A. (1982, Oct.). Stress can be a positive force in gifted children. Presented at the First Annual Conference of the Atlantic Association for Gifted and Talented Children. Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Linda Silverman, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist and Director of the Gifted Child Development Center in Denver, Colorado.

Helping Children Cope With Stress

- Allow the child to express his or her feelings.
- Offer consolation and tenderness *(shoulder and neck rubs help alot!)*
- Breathe deeply and encourage him or her to breathe with you.
- Go for a walk together and let the child talk it out.
- Validate the child's perceptions of the situation.
- Say something like, "Let's see if we can make this better."
- Brainstorm together some alternatives for dealing with the situation. *(Make some of them silly.)*
- Ask the child to choose one alternative to try.
- Encourage the child to follow-through.
- Ask if the plan worked. *(If not, make a new plan.)*
- For generalized stress, do relaxation exercises together, play soft music at bedtime, visualize peaceful scenes, read or play a quiet game, see a funny video, do massage.
- Brainstorm ways to cope with stress in the family or in the classroom. Make a pact to support each other.
- If stress seems out of control, consult a therapist.

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY

Creative
Voyager

Creative Ventures And Encounters

Jerry Flack
Tour Guide

On this journey we are going jogging – mental jogging, that is. Summer is a popular time for physical workouts. Many people take up jogging to rid themselves of winter's accumulated flab. Summer is also a great time to help children exercise and energize their mental muscles. Help your child shape up his or her imagination with a daily schedule of mental jogging. Here are two simple, no-cost intellectual exercises which may be performed at the family dinner table or during summer car trips.

"What if" questions stimulate a child's imagination and fuel his or her curiosity. They cost nothing but yield wonderful results in the development of creative and critical thinking skills. Here are some "What if?" starters:

- What if we spoke songs and sung speech?
- What if the weather never changed?
- What if we had no alphabet or written communication?
- What if the average human lifespan was 200 years?
- What if President Bush came to our house to dine tonight?

Everyone at the table or in the car, including Mom and Dad, takes a turn responding to the question. Of course, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. Wise parents will follow up on a child's initial response with further questions such as, "Gee, that is a neat answer. What made you think of that?" Without using dry and boring material, children quickly master the basics of "If...then" reasoning. Parents need only introduce this mental jogging technique once or twice. Then they can appoint a child as the "Family Question Master." The child's task becomes one of creating the "What if" question for each family sharing.

A child can also be given the pleasant task of being the family's official "Keeper of the Quotes." Quotations may be used in the same fashion as the "What if" questions. A quotation is given at the family meal or on a family car trip. Each person in the car thinks about the quotation for a few minutes and then shares the meaning the quotation holds for him or her. Here are three quotes which should provoke lively family discussions.

The future belongs to those who believe in their dreams.

– Eleanor Roosevelt –

Minds are like parachutes— They only function when open.

– Anonymous –

Every snowflake in an avalanche pleads "not guilty."

– Anonymous –

Speaking of quotes. George Bernard Shaw once said, "Few people think more than two or three times a year; I have made an international reputation for myself by thinking once or twice a week." Help your child at least equal Shaw's weekly regimen of thinking. Encourage him or her to do some mental jogging this summer! ■

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Gifted Education at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and editor of *G/T News*.

Thomas M. Buescher

ADOLESCENT PASSAGES

Building Relationships Beyond the Family
Part II

[In the last issue, we explored the nature of the process in which talented adolescents engage in learning to be separate but connected to their families. In this section we will examine some of the special problems adolescents face in becoming their own persons and suggests ways parents and teachers can help them negotiate these obstacles in the adolescent passage.]

In my own clinical work, I have observed some crucial differences between talented and average young people in the way they approach the dilemma of becoming 'separate but still connected' to their own families. Gifted and talented children are usually viewed as being *quite differentiated.* They appear to be more confident and comfortable with autonomy than others their age. As a result, they often seem more willing to explore and take risks prior to puberty and early adolescence.

The first real surge of feeling different or separate from their families in adolescence, however, seems to trigger a kind of large scale retreat, moving these students in reverse, past the normal reactive or rebellious activities of adolescence back into a "clingy" stage of apparent *undifferentiated* childhood. For example, some bright 13 and 14 year olds who once bristled with surety and confidence sometimes begin to act indecisive, incapable of even the simplest solution. They first seek out then may later resist parental support or encouragement. Friends who once were a source of support become purveyors of embarrassment or rejection.

Many clinicians believe that talented adolescents may subsequently experience a more jarring separation and individualizing stage by age 15 or 16 than other adolescents go through. Not only are some significant past relationships and attachments severed, but also the affirmation and ready support contributed by those persons must be renegotiated on new terms. If a young person sees the necessity of thinking and acting beyond the sphere of his or her parents' influence and care, how then is encouragement and affirmation to be secured? From whom?

Precious Gifts
And if the protagonist of the novel jumped off a roof, would you do it, too?!

We suspect it is for reasons like this that some very talented adolescents, when facing the prospect of having to accept and reinforce their unique abilities *on their own*, dismiss the challenge and drift away from further deliberate talent development (Buescher and Higham, 1989). It is as if they use their normal adolescent feelings of ambivalence and anger to wedge themselves not only away from previously supportive parents and teachers but also away from the very talents that had framed some of their uniqueness and individuality in the past.

What Helps Talented Teens Separate?

Obviously, this poses a special kind of transitional crisis (of varying degrees for different students) that all talented adolescents need to successfully weather. It usually means that parents, teachers, and even friends, must sensitively support a young person's loss of that earlier premature sense of independence and differentiation. These students need support to help them mourn the passing of those less mature, precocious efforts to be individuals, prior to adolescence, that lacked sufficient strength and grounding for the future. At the same time, adults must understand and help defuse the normal amount of panic or depression bright students encounter in the frustration of feeling "alone and adrift" while their egos build stronger skills for learning and living in a new stage of life.

Learning to become separate but connected to one's own family is a difficult task that lays the groundwork for intimate relationships in the future. We know that talent is strengthened and deepened by this slow developmental forging of self-ownership. As adults concerned about our own children and students, we can help by steadfastly assuring them that becoming an individual and forming new relationships beyond the family opens new doors for opportunities of all kinds. We need to welcome new supporters, teachers, and most importantly, new friends, to stand by them throughout the remainder of the adolescent journey.

One caution: this process is not without its rocky moments. Often in the course of achieving gradual separation from the family, adolescents can harshly devalue their parents, siblings, teachers, and even their own friends. In the search for new ways to be themselves and belong to society on their own terms, talented adolescents must also deny the earlier ideal role models of mothers, fathers, and teachers, sometimes temporarily replacing them with more questionable figures and heroes who seem contradictory to former family values and interests. Patience and reassurance pays off at these times. We simply need to keep in mind that each of these tactics helps adolescents take the most appropriate steps to build strong ego ideals that can assist them in measuring their own slow growth away from the family. ■

NEXT ISSUE: The Challenges Of New Relationships

REFERENCE

Buescher, T. & Higham, S. (1989). A developmental study of adjustment among talented adolescents. In J. VanTassel-Baska and P. Olszewski-Kubilius, (Eds.), *Patterns of influence on gifted learners: The home, the self, and the school* (pp. 102-124). New York: Teachers College Press.

Thomas M. Buescher, Ph.D., is a Research Scholar, Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University, and editor of *Understanding Gifted and Talented Adolescents*.

ANNOUNCEMENT

1990 Hollingworth Award Competition

Intertel Foundation, Inc., announces the 1990 Hollingworth Award Competition. This award is presented annually for proposed research in the field of the education or psychology of gifted children and youth, and is open to individuals as well as educational organizations.

Deadline for submission of proposals is January 15, 1990. Application information may be obtained from: Roxanne H. Cramer, Chairman, Hollingworth Award Committee, 4300 Sideburn Rd., Fairfax, VA 22030.

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

There's still time to order while supplies last!

☐ **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS**	**VOL 1 - ISSUE 1**
☐ **EARLY DEVELOPMENT**	**VOL 1 - ISSUE 2**
☐ **HIGHLY GIFTED**	**VOL 1 - ISSUE 3**
☐ **LEARNING STYLES**	**VOL 1 - ISSUE 4**
☐ **PARENTING THE GIFTED**	**VOL 1 - ISSUE 5**

Send $6.50 per issue (prepaid) to: **Snowpeak Publishing, Inc.**
P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122 or call (303) 798-0986.

☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD NAME____________________

Card#________________ ADDRESS____________________

Expiration Date__________

____________________ CITY__________STATE_____ZIP_____

Signature

ANTENNA . . . .

Current Developments in Gifted Education

The school district budget is reduced. The gifted and talented program is eliminated. And another child passes out of the system – into mediocrity.

Schools are becoming increasingly concerned with "at risk" students, those who do not achieve and who may not finish high school. We in gifted education have always known that our students are at risk. Bright young people are at risk when their education is laced with boredom, repetition, lack of challenge. We know that we lose their minds as they turn off and drop out. We know that we lose their bodies to alcohol, drugs, suicide. But the most critical loss is their potential. We lose what they might have become.

"If we can provide them with a means by which to learn to better deal with their exceptional role in a world of mediocrity, do we not owe them, as well as ourselves, that chance to avail all of us of their exceptionality?" (Farrell, 1989, p. 138). If gifted education is not a budgetary priority, how can we prevent the loss of intellect, of self esteem, of future contributions to the well-being of society?

Our solution may not be entirely in terms of dollars for educational programs. Budget is usually scarce in gifted education, but there is an abundance of people resources in the field – both parents and educators.

Leadership among parents has always been strong in areas of advocacy and awareness. Parents have been the moving force behind the creation and continuance of programs for the gifted and talented across the country. We know that cohesiveness among parents – a united voice – works in positive ways.

Committed volunteer efforts on the part of school personnel can also be effective. A unique example of such leadership is a group called Colorado Coordinators Council. The CCC is a "headless" organization composed of gifted and talented coordinators, teachers, administrators, parents and anyone interested in the gifted who desires to become involved.

There are no officers, no dues, no bylaws. Monthly meetings are held in school districts across the state on a volunteer host basis. Speakers and programs on a great variety of topics related to gifted and talented education are usually drawn from within the ranks.

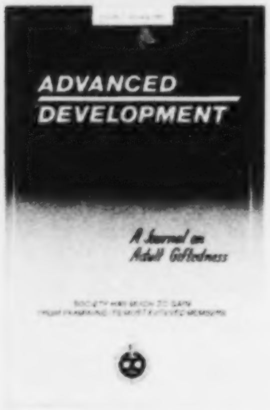
The CCC has been meeting in this manner for approximately 10 years with attendance at most meetings ranging from 30-50 people. Its role is to advocate for gifted education and to network, supporting appropriate legislation and curriculum. CCC serves as a model of cooperative effort that could be replicated in other states.

If we wait for funding to adequately service gifted and talented students, we will lose many of them. Only by utilizing gifted leadership can we save gifted students – for themselves and for our future. ■

REFERENCE

Farrell, D.M. (1989). Suicide among gifted students. *Roeper Review*, *11*(3), 134-139.

Dorothy Knopper is State Consultant on the Gifted, Colorado Department of Education and "Open Space" columnist for *Roeper Review*.



ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT JOURNAL: *A Journal on Adult Giftedness*

Gifted children usually have gifted parents. If you are wondering about your own giftedness, subscribe to **Advanced Development:** ***A Journal on Adult Giftedness.*** No other journal focuses specifically on gifted adults. Unlike the traditional view of adult giftedness as high levels of productivity and creativity, advanced development in adults is defined as the deepening of the personality and strengthening of human values such as empathy, concern for others, responsibility and integrity.

NAME____________________________________
ADDRESS_________________________________
____
CITY______________STATE_____________ZIP______

To order, fill out and return this form and send it to Snowpeak Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122. This journal is published annually and is available at a cost of $15 (Foreign/Canadian $18 U.S. Funds).

Linda Sinclair

from parent to parent

PART II *(Continued from last issue)*

"Michael is a total joy. He requires a lot of time and energy with constant talking, questions, and projects. He can think of more things to do in a 20-minute period that 10 people his age. He needs continual interaction and expects it. He is loving and cuddly and caring. He demands a large share of my time and energy but gives it back 100-fold. Michael is like a sunbeam scattering light and warmth. There is no way you can feel "down" when he is near. He has more common sense than most adults I know. He has the capacity to always see the bright side of things, to sort out priorities, to understand what's important and what's not, to live each day with enthusiasm, and to love deeply and receive love tenderly. "

"But, like all children, Michael does have his feisty side. He can be stubborn, ornery and VERY independent. Ever since he could say, 'I will do it Myself,' he has tried. He stomps his little feet if he has to do something he doesn't like and curls his lip. And he always tries to have the last word. If I say, "Put all of the cars in the box;" he will say, 'I'll put them all there but THIS one.' He complains about a lot of rules at school being "stupid" but he reluctantly complies with them. He constantly says, 'How do YOU know that?' or 'Why do I have to?'"

"Socially, I haven't seen anyone Michael couldn't get along with. He just loves to be around people, small groups or large groups. I notice that all of the children seem to like him and he likes most of them. Nick, on the other hand, is more introverted, so sometimes his giftedness is more painful for him than his more outgoing brother. Nick enjoys being smart, but there are times when he not only knows that others perceive him as different, he also perceives himself as different. Michael has an easier time. Even older children do not mind his intrusions and he's certainly not intimidated by anyone I have observed. He speaks his mind. He tells his teacher what he doesn't like to do quite frankly, even though he does it."

"Speaking of school, if there was one suggestion I could make to other parents of gifted children, it is to learn early, and keep on learning. Learn about the opportunities and services that are available to you; there is so much out there that can help you and your child. Parents need to become their child's best advocate. For instance, we just threw Nick into the public schools thinking they would take care of him. You can't just 'count' on the schools. You have to join parent support groups, gifted and talented groups, and meet with teachers and administrators and fight for what you know is right for your child. If you think you are right about something your child needs, fight for it, because if you don't no one else will. The rewards for the extra effort and commitment it takes to parent a gifted child are more than worth it." ■

Linda Sinclair is a freelance writer from Denver, Colorado and parent of a highly gifted child.

Parent to Parent is your forum for sharing ideas with other parents of gifted children. We want to hear your story—what has worked, or not worked, for your family. Please send your name, address, and phone number to *Understanding Our Gifted*, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122, and we will contact you for details.

Understanding Our Gifted™

Don't Delay. Return This Order Form Today!

☐ New Subscriber
☐ Gift Subscription (for your friends, teachers, relatives)
☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD

YES! Start my subscription to *Understanding Our Gifted™*. Payment is enclosed or charge my VISA or MASTER CARD. (Just $30 a year) – (Canada-$35 U.S.; Foreign $37.50 U.S.) NO RISK GUARANTEE: If at any time you decide *Understanding Our Gifted* is not for you, write 'cancel' across the label and return it for a full refund of unmailed issues.

Card # ____________________
Expiration Date ____________________
____
Signature

NAME ____________________
COURTESY OF (if gift) ____________________
ADDRESS ____________________
CITY ____________ STATE ____________ ZIP ____________

Make checks payable to **SNOWPEAK PUBLISHING, INC.™**, P.O. Box 3489, Littleton, CO 80122 (303) 798-0986

THE BULLETIN BOARD

This space is for you!

We are happy to use THE BULLETIN BOARD in any way that will serve parents, teachers and non-profit agencies. This will enable you to support each others' needs. Send us your request and we'll print it on the bulletin board as space permits.

The Roeper City and Country School, Roeper Review and The Global Awareness Committee of NAGC and the World Council for Gifted & Talented Children are co-sponsoring a Conference on Global Awareness on October 27th and 28th in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. For information about the conference, please contact:

Roeper Review, P.O. Box 329
Bloomfield HIlls, Michigan 48013
(313) 642-1500, ext. 158.

"Partners In Excellence: Celebrating The Humanities K-College"

On October 13-14, 1989, the Arizona Assn. for Gifted and Talented and Arizona English Teachers Assn., will sponsor the 1989 Joint State Conference, "Partners In Excellence: Celebrating the Humanities K-College". This conference is for educators, administrators and parents. It will be held at the YMCA Leadership Development Center and Holiday Inn Corporate Center, Phoenix, Arizona. Contact Sunny McLennan (602) 982-1110 Ext. 287, or Shirley Kasper (602) 982-1110.

NEXT ISSUE

FOCUS:

UNDERACHIEVEMENT

RE-EXAMINING THE CONCEPT OF UNDERACHIEVEMENT
Joanne Whitmore

STUDENT INTEREST: A Key to the Gifted Underachiever
Linda Emrich

The voice of the intelligence is soft and weak, said Freud. It is drowned out by the roar of fear. It is ignored by the voice of desire. It is contradicted by the voice of shame. It is hissed away by hate, and extinguished by anger. Most of all it is silenced by ignorance.

Karl Menninger
The Progressive, Oct., 1953.

UNDERSTANDING OUR *GIFTED*™
P.O. Box 3489
Littleton, CO 80122

BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
Littleton, CO
Permit No. 493

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED